













**The Hopes and Decisions of the Passion**

**OF OUR**

**MOST HOLY REDEEMER**



# THE HOPES AND DECISIONS OF THE PASSION

OF OUR

**Most Holy Redeemer**

BY THE REV.

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**I Dedicate this Volume**

**TO**

**CHARLES LINDLEY, VISCOUNT HALIFAX**

**AS A SLENDER TRIBUTE OF AFFECTION AND RESPECT**

**FOR ONE**

**WHO IS AS LOYAL AND CONSIDERATE IN PRIVATE FRIENDSHIP**

**AS HE IS FAITHFUL AND DEVOTED IN**

**THE SERVICE OF CHRIST.**





## *PREFACE.*

OF the Sermons in this Volume, the first eight were preached in barest outline in St. Paul's Cathedral, in the Lent of 1884 and 1885.

They are published in a much extended form, with alterations and additions freely made, as the same subject presented itself to the mind on other occasions. They appear now, in accordance with requests received from many quarters, and after a long delay occasioned by want of time and temporary failure of health. Like those which preceded them, they do not attempt to deal with the whole subject, but only with single aspects of the Passion.

The last Sermon was preached in substance at the Nave Service in Worcester Cathedral, in 1884. on the evening of Easter Day.

It is hoped that, slender and inadequate as such treatment of so great a subject always must be, it may help some more firmly to follow the Great Example, and more truly to worship, love, and trust in Him Who is Eternal God and Perfect Man—the Saviour of us all.

THE COLLEGE, WORCESTER.

*June 8, 1886.*

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## The Hope of Forgiveness.

*'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'*  
ST. LUKE XIX. 10.

WE cannot venture, my brothers, quite evidently, to think of anything this week except the Sacred Passion. And it is well, because the study of the Passion, amidst innumerable lessons in detail, has written on it in characters of unmistakable clearness three broad teachings.

(1) First, it is true that our purblind or earthly eyes may catch a glimmer of the love of Jesus Christ. St. Paul was impressed by its gigantic power in breaking down barriers and piercing through obstructions, in distancing space, and defying time; and whilst it is possible that the language of empty sentiment and a baneful habit of religious unreality may have discredited in many minds the true power of this glorious reality, it is good for us to stand in quiet thought before its evident expression, and learn that it is a truth. To know this as a fact, and not as a phrase, is also to learn that we, even we—strange as it appears

—may in some measure give back what we have received from our Master—love for love ; and to love Jesus Christ is, we cannot doubt it, the strongest and most lasting spring of a really manly, because of a really Christian, life.

(2) And again here, above all, love “may abound in knowledge ;” at the Cross it is that we learn to know God, and not to rest in dreams and imaginations on *that* subject, but “to *know* Him, is eternal life.”

(3) And further, to the eye that is fixed eagerly and devoutly on the Passion, there comes out in greater distinctness the lines of relation between God and His creature ; and truly to realise and act on that relation is Religion.

We are constantly, nowadays, brought in contact with the teachings of what is called Agnosticism. This would appear to be a phase of irreligious thought, springing either from spiritual laziness or spiritual despair. It never can be the spring of a vigorous and useful life. A force strong enough to face the trials of Time can never be supplied by a negation. Now, the difference between the Agnostic and the Christian is this : the Agnostic declares God to be unknown and unknowable ; the Christian says, “Yes ; unknown, quite possibly ; indeed to a soul enslaved by mortal sin, quite certainly ; but unknowable—*emphatically* no.” For God is or may be known—so teaches the Christian Church—in Christ. “In the face of Jesus

Christ," to use an apostolic expression; in the face, above all, of Christ Crucified, *there*, there is an unveiling of God.

It is surely, dear friends, most important that we should know God's relation to ourselves. Take my advice, then: with earnestness and calmness contemplate the Cross.

Now here, as we embark on a boundless ocean, we must lay the lines of our course.

There are three virtues, called theological, because they bind the soul to God; all may be stimulated by the study of Christ Crucified. I tie myself down to one. Whatever else we need every one of us, certainly we are in need of Hope; Hope—to put it crudely—in a world of time, to be better; Hope in a world of eternity, to be saved. Let us think here and now of the Hope of the Passion; let us contemplate the consolation of the Cross.

### I.

Hope, indeed, in its *natural* form is as necessary as it is beautiful. Without it, especially amidst a life of sorrow, life would be ruined. In the deepest night of trouble and disaster it anticipates the first streaks of the morning, and even in presence of Death it can share with Love the victory over the grave. It is indeed the very spring of activity; and to lose it is to



plunge into darkness, often into disaster. Some of the deepest crimes in Florence at the time of the plague, in Paris at the time of the Terror, came from a final failure of Hope. If Faith gives to life its power of endurance, if Love give its courage and its joy, it is Hope—like “wingless victory”—that, *abiding* in the soul in the day of trouble, gives a spring of energy because it anticipates a better morning.

Much more is *Divine* Hope a power.

*This* is God's gift, supernatural and from the Divine treasury, an attitude and force of soul by which man awaits with confidence the attainment of the highest destiny of the creature, and the means to that attainment. This Hope is no *vague* imagining; it rests upon God's faithfulness, and is guaranteed by the unbounded merits of the Passion. In the soul it may be carried away by surrender to the temptations of presumption or of despair, for it is not *certainly*—that is not ours this side the grave—but, on the other hand, it is protected in the soul by two gifts of the Spirit, like warrior angels guarding a heavenly treasure—the gifts of Ghostly Strength and Holy Fear.

Now there are at least four Hopes which spring from the Passion, and every one of us, my brothers, in the course of our mortal pilgrimage, need these as a possession. The first is the Hope of the Forgiveness of our Sins.

## THE HOPE OF FORGIVENESS

### II.

In every human soul, dear friends, there is a sense of great moral need ; sometimes dim or blunted, sometimes keen and clear-eyed, but there it is. We cannot, in the deepest and saddest of all things, we cannot depend upon ourselves. The deepest and saddest of all things is human sin. However men close their eyes, or avert their gaze, however much instances may be quoted in which all sense of sin seems to have vanished, still so great we are, so much in us remains of the image of the Creator, so truly have each of us within the "light that lighteneth every man," that, whatsoever our degradation, we have not fallen so low as not to know that we have fallen. And so across the page of human history there broods the shadow of "something wrong."

That "something wrong" is Sin.

We know strangely little about it, and yet of it we know enough to see its seriousness.

It is not mere misfortune, for its commission carries, as a consequence, the sense of *guilt*. It is not a stage in progress, or a phase of moral advance, or of goodness in an undeveloped state, for the further it develops the more it is felt to part company with goodness, and to carry with it the sense of wrong. It is not temptation, although temptation often leads to it ; nor mere misery and wretchedness, though these follow fast on

its track. It is a condition of heart and will at variance with the true law of man's being—at variance, that is, with the law of God.

We know that the human race was reduced into this condition by a power external to itself; that sin is not *natural* to it, not part of its essential being. We know, by the law of Divine government by which we are linked one to another in the human family by a mysterious bond, that sin, which laid its grip on the father of the race, has never since relaxed it. We know, therefore, that deliverance also must come from without, and yet, in so *intimate* a matter, from some power a very part of ourselves; and out of this tremendous dilemma we are delivered by the Incarnation and the Passion. “We know that the Son of God is come,” and that “He was made sin for us. Who knew no sin.” Thus much we know of the roots of the evil, of the beginning and the treatment of the disease; thus much, and little more. When we become conscious of all this, we awaken to a condition of our race terrible in its gloom. Strange intimations come to us of the meaning of all this from another world; and we become aware that we are the subjects of Divine intervention and of mysterious transactions in the sphere of Eternity.

So much for antecedent hints and histories of the saddening fact.

Then we look around, and all is in the confusion

of battle. The brightest day is darkened with cloud, the fairest lives are subject to sorrow, the very texture of life becomes woven in part out of the consequence of sin; so that—so used are we to the calamity—we find it difficult for imagination to picture an ordinary world of work and duty in which to have our probation, without, as part of its constituent forces and motives, the element of sin.

We turn over the pages of History, and in one thing we find sin rich; it is rich in consequences; no denying its malign results, if the words “pain,” and “crime,” and “sorrow” have any meaning at all.

We turn to the Future. Here we are confronted indeed by banks of storm-cloud, and pulled up short by the chasm of the grave. Still there are flashes of light, and voices strange and terrible, all deepening in darker shadow the responsibility and destiny of man. There are solemn announcements of coming judgment, and pictures of the terrible consequences of persistent, unrepented sin, couched in words of awful severity, but unmistakably intended to convey to us with energy the real dreadfulness of a choice made and pursued in the interest of what is wrong. And then we know no more. Foolish to dogmatise beyond teachings so cloudy and so serious, best to acknowledge ignorance when there it is.

Yes; and best also to deal with what we *do* know with clear and steady eye.



Now men are tempted to shirk the serious side of life and the full meaning of the awful fact of sin; and *one* effect of the death of the Redeemer is to help them to think what they are about. Realise the death of the Son of God, and at once it breaks upon you that there must be in it some terrible meaning; realise that *that* tremendous sacrifice was necessitated by sin—and sin, you see at once, must be of tremendous consequence.

Men, indeed, have been conscious enough of sin and simply passed it by. The ancient world did not—could not—close its eyes to the overwhelming fact; and so with an undertone of melancholy, never wholly silenced, they smiled in the sunshine and laughed in the laughter of life. What else was there to do? They could not console, what could they but ignore? And men in Christendom, half paganised in thought, have tried to do the same. It will not do. The solemn beat of the unseen Feet has been heard in the halls of History, and their echo startles the sleepers; a Face of unexampled nobleness and sorrow has risen in view amid the gloom of the world, once seen never to be forgotten. The Face of the Crucified is the revelation of a mystery. Mankind is forced to face as a fact the seriousness of sin.

## III.

But there is a danger of dealing with broad and general questions without bringing them home. Sin, like Religion, is a personal matter. To be self-seeking, to be the victim of a moral perverseness of Will, to take our own destiny into our own hands, is *to leave God*. To sin with easy-going indifference, and waken up, and then fall back again; to sin from careless submission to custom; to sin from pure neglect of exertion and high principle—how common is this! And then sinning *blinds* the soul to the facts of a higher life—to the greatness, the beauty, the nearness of another world; it *paralyses* the soul in its energies of goodness and responses to grace; when not heartily expelled, it lurks in the ~~soul~~ like a wild beast, and springs out in unexpected moments to do its work; it *binds* the soul in a chain of evil habit, till the power of breaking its bands is gone.

The moment of awakening comes,—sometimes in the silent hours of night; sometimes after the commission of a more serious act than usual of victorious sin; sometimes in a stray circumstance; sometimes through a voice from the pulpit; sometimes in the time of prayer; sometimes by an open grave, when it is felt, as some one says—felt with bitterness—that now only to the mouldering dust can be paid the tribute which

was due to the beating heart. Perhaps—how awful!—if the heart be hardened by persistence, the awakening only comes in fulness in the awful glare of the other world.

None the less, it comes; and then—then it is felt in its fulness that be the *theories* of sin what they may, sin is a matter awfully personal to every soul. For the power and tyranny of sin are then only truly known when a real battle with it has begun; when the soul sees the light upon the mountains, and begins the struggling ascent towards the breaking of the day, then—then, and not till then—does it know the sharpness and steepness of the track.

And for any soul to waken up to facts, when it long has lain in sin, is to realise the unutterable pathos of the Scriptural sayings as to “the lost.”

To feel myself among “the lost” is, indeed, to awaken to a tragic situation. Pathetic, mysterious, terrible is the fact that such there may be; but most soul-subduing the further recollection that *I* may be among them.

To be “lost”! Even here it is possible. It is to have evil motives governing the conduct of life with increasing persistency and power; to forfeit self-respect; to open the door of the soul to the intrusion of all possible form of wrong; to incur dimness of conscience, and forfeiture of serenity of heart; to have a weakened will, and an advancing failure of control over the

passions ; to sink into the shadow with an absence of the sense of the beauty of goodness, and so a want of perception, quick and clear, of all that stops its way ; and then the sapping of the quiet strength which " bears good fortune meekly, and suffers ill with constancy, and through evil or through good upholds truth always." To be " lost " is to miss the bearings of life's journey, and lose hold of its higher blessings, with just such light left in the Present, to show how black and evil it is contrasted with the Past.

Tremendous, indeed, are the forces at play on a human spirit to bring it to this. But we do deal with tremendous forces. That man knows little of life, little of the crannies and caverns on the dark side of his own spiritual being, who does not remember the sound of the dreary surging of the waves within those caverns, and does not at times fear lest the past may be a presage of a future storm, a storm in which he may be numbered, unless there be deliverance, numbered among " the lost." The sound should strike the soul with piercing solemnity. " The lost ! " It is like the wail of the winds on a night of tempest ; it is wrapped in sable, like the gathering gloom on a morning of storm. " The lost ! " It reminds of hopes shattered, purposes broken, promises betrayed. " The lost ! " It brings visions of ruined homes and broken hearts, and vanished, beautiful but unsubstantial dreams.

There have been times when the world itself seemed



to sail without compass and without the light of stars,—such times as the years of the crumbling of the imperial sway of Rome; such times as those of confusion and darkness in the tenth century; such, again, as those in which young France was found at the close of the First Empire, with its deceiving lights, its hollow show, its tinsel, its insincerity, its breaking of moral ties and polluting of high affections—without faith, without a future. Times like these have been in souls, when all landmarks seem gone, when despondency is sovereign, hiding hope of pardon, paralysing all strength for struggle.

Are there any such among you? Are there who still, though straying, have not become victims of the hardened heart, who still—to reverse St. Bernard's saying—"may be pierced by compunction, or softened by affection, or moved by prayers; who *do* feel the force of solemn warnings, and are not hardened by punishments; who are not ungrateful for benefits, not faithless to wise counsels, not fierce under rebuke, or shameless in matters of shame; who still have some religious fear of spiritual danger, still some human tenderness, still reverent respect for the things of God,—who are *not* altogether forgetful of the Past, nor neglectful of the Present, nor improvident towards the Future." Are there such? are there such? Reckon ye yourselves among "the lost," and yet with serious fear and a breaking heart at the reckoning? Well, here comes in the mystery of the

Passion; here is One before us Who never despaired of humanity; listen and look to the voice, to the face, of the Crucified. Is the cry of the text not guaranteed in its truth by the self-sacrificing anguish of the Vision? —“The Son of Mân is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

## IV.

And the first step in the “seeking” is watching, and waiting, and calling the lost one, and then penetrating his heart; and the first step in “saving” is the granting, with power and tenderness, the forgiveness of sins.

And how God has watched and waited! Has He not guided you in wonderful ways? Has He not called ~~when~~ you would not listen, and then persisted with an untiring, persevering love? Nothing, nothing is so wonderful, when we wake to think of it, as the patience and persistence of God.

And then “to save” us, here is the evidence of His offer of mercy reviving our hope. Forgiveness! It is like the cool breath of morning to the fevered brow. It is like the touch of fresh and sparkling water to the parched and thirsty tongue. Forgiveness! It is as a longed-for face after years of separation. Forgiveness! It is the blessed gift of Jesus, raising us from the dead. It is the result of His long and

fearful sorrow. Its price is the Precious Blood. The power that can grant it has been earned in love and suffering; it is the special prerogative of the Son of Man.

Revive then, look up, drooping soul, half dazed with memories that cannot be obliterated, and crippled by sins which rule with iron sway. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they may be as white as snow." Christ has gained the power, guaranteed the truth, of what you long for. Look up; let hope revive within you. You, even you, may be forgiven.

"Gained the power!"

Power always commands admiration, or trust, or fear. The secret sway that *can* be exercised over that which ordinarily defies command—this, this is admirable. Science wields the sceptre that rules many secrets of the natural world. The genius of ~~Painting~~ draws life from colour; the genius of Music holds the secret of the charm of sound. The Crucified holds a power in the Passion that none but He can wield or think of wielding. He has achieved the *ἄνω ποταμῶν* of the great tragic poet: He rolls back or He transforms the Past.

The Past! How inexorable! how mysterious! Man stands, like the traveller on the deck of the hurrying vessel, and before him stretches the illimitable waste of waters into which he is plunging on; around him he has a yard or two for air and exercise in the narrow

confines of the ship; behind him, in increasing distances, seem to hurry away the traversed reaches of the fast receding sea.

So we stand, O soul, in the cramped and crowded Present, and gaze behind and before. Before, the Future is dim and misty, wrapped—according to our mood and temper—sometimes in sun-lighted, sometimes in tempestuous, clouds. “There, anyhow,” we think, “*that* is before us.” If we are eager, impetuous, hopeful, we look yearningly onward. We are men of progress; we are all for advancing; we make for the gates of the day. Here, just by us, is the Present. It is narrow, but its narrowness makes it intense. If enthusiasm carry us to the Future, the Present is so full at once of needs and *immediate* offers, it has the power to absorb. Yes; it has a fatal power to plunge the soul in the region of sensation. And some, without shame or fear, in these days tell us that life is only worth living in proportion as we can crowd sensations of pleasure into each passing moment ere it flies.

Yet, indeed, for the soul, in its Present, in its Future, how much depends upon the Past!

That strange store of half-buried memories; that unrelenting prison-house of buried hopes; that—above all—that painstaking preserver, that accurate register of sin—what is it to us?

Sometimes we bury it carefully, after trying to slay it. Yes—and we are conscious of it—it is “buried, but



not dead." Sometimes we think of it, as of many who have left us, with a hopeless, helpless despair. Sometimes, like the miser in the fine Christmas story, its angel leads us back, and we are broken with sorrow to see it live again, now that all is changed. Sometimes, unexpectedly, like the traveller who tops the crest of the mountain, we are startled, looking back, to see a vision we had forgotten. "Who is that," we say, "wandering in those flowery meadows, gay as the day-dawn? Whose is that ringing laughter, whose that joyous voice? Can that be myself?" It can, it is, O soul, in the mystery of thy Past. And now how changed! Where, O where, is that old vigour? where that joyous innocence? where that unflagging energy? where that quiet happy purpose? where that boundless hope? Where indeed? Look again: see that figure entering a cloud behind you; approaching, wilfully, a chasm. The cloud enwraps it, the chasm has engulfed it; it has toiled on, with wounded hands and aching limbs. In thy Past there has been sin. The first, that marred thy innocence; the next, and then the next, spoiling thy promise, hardening thy heart. Ah! why is the Present absorbing thee in what debases? Why is the Future at best so cloudy, and bounded only by the grave? Because the Past is dogging thee like an assassin, armed with thy sin.

O poor soul! This, even this, may be changed, Thou art lost if it is not, it may. One Power can

roll back the river, one King sway thy destiny. Jesus will not leave thee if thou wilt let Him stand by thee in this paralysing trouble. Jesus Crucified can transform the Past.

Gracious and Blessed One — strong, and, though strong, yet tender—in Thee we hope, for Thy Passion has sealed Thy promise “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

## V.

One word, and I have done. From the grim line of the coast of Calabria there stands out into the waters of the Faro the sea-girt fortress of Silla. This was, a century ago, the scene of a terrible disaster. *Now* the fortress—castle and the cliff alike—lies quiet in the sunlight, and the fiercest sounds which rouse it are the sighing of the winds over its ruined battlements, and at its base the solemn heaving of the sea; but *then* it was shaken to its foundations by the repeated shocks of an earthquake. The aged Prince, in view of the calamity, had determined to await the end on his knees before the Crucifix, in contemplation of the Passion. He was over-persuaded by friends to change his purpose and fly; blocked roads and flying fragments of *débris* made the flight a mere forward and backward movement between his inland fortress and the sea. At last, while the Chapel of the Crucifix remained unmo-

lest, the end came, to himself and his people, who had fled seaward for safety,—in the waves.

There are moral earthquakes, my brothers, many and terrible, which shake and imperil the soul. Settle it in your minds that when the earthquakes of passion, the earthquakes of temptation, the earthquakes of distrust of God, of flagging purpose, abandoned resolution, of despondency, of despair—that when these are shaking your soul you will try to remember that the safest place is, not with the crowd, but before the Crucifix; that there remains to you the hope of the penitent sinner, the Hope of the Forgiveness of Sin.

Your Past may be black; take it in penitence to your Saviour; your Future may be cloudy, trust it to your Lord.

“Lost? were you lost? And did He stoop to save you,  
Tender and true, and strong with sin to cope?”

Lost, you were lost, and by His blood He gave you  
Life’s deepest lesson, Death’s sustaining Hope.”

Your sin may be deeper, deadlier than you realise in this life of twilight; but you know, fainting soul, that your Master understands your difficulties, knows—for He entered the ranks of man—how easy is evil, how hard it is to do right, and that as He in the conflict bore the strain of crucifixion, if you are but true to yourself He will never betray.

It is one of the blessed mysteries of grace, that in the forgiven soul the fair results of former graces

(killed, for the time, by sin) are not obliterated but revived.

“Fair scenes, kind words, good deeds, no power can sever  
From those who find their pardon in God’s love,  
In things of beauty there are joys for ever  
Found first on earth, then clasped in heaven above.”

Turn, then—turn your hearts to the Highest. Let the sunshine come after the rain. Forsake the sin, so far as now you can, by sorrow and fair intention. Let Him, let *Him* find you Who came to seek “the lost.”

Judas, remember, was not in condemnation because he betrayed his Master, but because having betrayed he would not turn again and trust the boundless pity of Eternal Love.



## The Hope of Light.

*'At evening-time it shall be light.'*—ZECH. <sup>xiv.</sup> 7.

THE great gift, then, my brothers, which is guaranteed to us on Calvary is the Hope of the Forgiveness of Sin. The Passion of our most dear Redeemer possesses the unique and invaluable power—the power of doing the undo-able; the power of, in some measure, unmaking the Past. His Death is that act, so strange, so supernatural, which contains a force, made applicable to each soul through penitence, of reversing the most serious acts of life, of reversing those violations of the laws of the Creator, of the laws of the soul's true life, which, in their ultimate and awful consequences, are so hard to measure—unless we learn them from the tragedy of Calvary—those acts which are incorporated in *ourselves* by our consenting, and are, in fact, *our sins*. Therefore it is (is it not?) that the Passion of our Master contains a serious 'warning—warning of the dreadfulness of sin, warning also against the most selfish, heartrending form of human cowardice—the cowardice of despair. The first "Hope of the

Passion," the first "Consolation of the Cross," is the Hope of Forgiveness, the hope of reversing the Past.

But we do not, you and I, possess only a Past; we possess, it is necessary to remember, also a Future; and for that Future—the immediate and the distant—other hopes are needed by us all.

On one of these I dwell here and now. If for the Past we need the Hope of Forgiveness, for the Future we need to realise the promise of the Prophet: "at evening-time there shall be *light*." The Prophet, indeed, is speaking of the final burst of vision, when this sad world's most dark perplexities shall be cleared in the glory of Christ's coming; but this, after all, is but a final act, the summing up of all before it. God works by law. His goings forth are from everlasting. The text contains *a principle* which is worked out in this "Hope of the Passion."

And surely, my friends, this Hope is a necessity for fallen and immortal man.

Whenever the first awakening comes, we are dimly conscious that light is needed to see things as they *are*, not merely as they *seem*. We find ourselves, in starting, in a twilighted land. The "seeming" of all things is around us and *upon* us, settled down upon the heart with the weight of a nightmare, so vivid, so solid, we scarce can shake it off.

*Nature* is before us, with the vastness of her gigantic distances, and the microscopic minuteness of her in-

exhaustible treasure stores ; now awing us into silent dread and wonder at the inexorable advance and regulated march, so unaffected by ourselves, that *we* seem less than nothing before this immense unvarying certainty ; now consoling us (with the same dangerous exaggeration on the other side) by a sense of her solidity, and a temptation to believe *her* own are resources on which to rely, the one thing certain which really belongs to us, and all that is unseen the mere product of an "unpractical" imagining ; now (possibly with deeper danger) seeming thinner than shadow, a mere trick of our dreaming, ready—at a touch of really awakened consciousness—ready to vanish away. Nature ! Dissected by science, decked out by poetry, utilised and vulgarised by mere low self-interest,—we want light to see and read her message, and understand how we stand related to her, and when we are misled.

We waken to *society*. We are in it, with its vast complication of facts, its regulated march, as if by drill, and yet the details of endless variety, its changeless corporate existence, and yet the silent slipping out of life after life in all its individual mystery. One by one they go ; *they* were there just now that have vanished into the silent land ; but stable and sure as ever is the vast complex whole. It affects us, we breathe its air, we bow to its maxims, we fall in with its organised work ; and yet we are uneasy. The thing *seems* so strong, so dominant, so unassailable, and yet we feel something is

out of gear; it is a *seeming*; we rub our eyes, we cannot see clearly—"the cry of Ajax is for *light*."

We waken up to *life*. Here there is growth and movement,—evident in ourselves, in others we know most closely, world of passion, sensation, thought—a joyous sense of motion, with sun and air and breath of flowers, and hopes that dance and smile and beckon on; then struggle, disappointment, sorrow,—a sense of sorrow, full of penetrating sadness, near us in others, like a felt but unseen presence in a sleeper's room. Stop to philosophise, it seems a purposeless maze; act merely on personal grounds, it brings a round of plain and necessary daily duties, with not much apparent usefulness, till the darkness deepens, and we confront the grave.

What does it all mean? This iron necessity, and yet this individual freedom to do what we will; this unrelenting massive whole, and yet the jostling inconsistencies of every detail; this bright and cheery starting, and then the journey, advancing—whither? No aim, no clue; but tears and aching feet, or settled, stern, unreasoning resolve. What—what, we ask in impatient, petulant anxiety—what is the significance of life?

And then we have been used to another world—a very real one—of religious practice and religious teaching, going on along with all this strong *seeming* world, growing into a part of it, but always with a difference that jars. These prayers, repeated morning and



night, and only half realised; these Sunday actions of mysterious Sacraments, of Psalm and Hymn and Collect, with a strange awe hanging round them, and yet allowed by us and many round us to be spoken of (if spoken of at all) with condescending toleration or a half amused indifference; until these strange practices, unlike the outer solid scene, are *made* to match it, and men neglect them, because they cannot bear the jar against their ordinary selves, or try like fools to keep them, emptying them of all solemn tendency of teaching, or supernaturalism of restraint. *This* world of mystery, too, is only made endurable by being brought to the level of the commonplace and customary. And yet the commonplace and customary have suffered shocks. However much we have been wrapped in the mantle of material work, or contented with the ways of the world, there have been

“Falling from us vanishings,  
Blank misgivings of the creature  
Moving about in worlds not realised.”

I suppose the most commonplace men have their moments of exaltation. Strangely, sadly enough too, what *might* exalt most, is often most lowering. The mysteries of light and sound, of stony rocks and starry heavens, *might* speak of the Creator; but the scientist most often forgets the Great Inventor, and the labourer in agriculture is usually little sensitive to the fair visions of the spiritual world. Yet all have their moments of

revelation. Else why the rapture of astonished awe that wakens in a simple soul at the sight of the mountains, or at the thunderous music of the sea? Why the deep sense of saddened happiness in a spectacle of real grandeur, contrasted with the mere level pleasure in the reading of a pleasant book? Why do pathetic songs form the staple of the ballad poetry of the people, and not only sailors love saddening poetry—they who have had the training of the solemn sea,—but even the labourer, tired with tillage, and the smith, weary from the anvil, find solace in melancholy song?—why, but that the roughest and least naturally spiritual have a half-hidden consciousness of their true home being “a better country,” have a sense of the dignity and severity for all of us, of Love and Death?

But more. Moments of revelation have surely come in every life. Flashes, sudden and swift, marking off what is from what seems to be, at least leave memories. There are days on the Swiss mountains, when the storm has long been gathering, when rank after rank of marching clouds have scaled the highest heavens, when the sunlight grows to dimness, and there creeps on a deep and solemn darkness, and peal on peal of thunder follows the usual prelude of the large determined drops of the rain. The storm sweeps down; the traveller finds himself enveloped in shrouds of darkness, and he scarce dare move with hope to find a pathway, but for the sudden brilliant flashes of vivid fire. There is plenty


of danger, but in the sudden rapid light also there is hope.

There are nights of tempest on the pitiless Atlantic, when, from the dense and murky masses of the storm-clouds, the flashes of the sudden lightning at least show the situation, and put in evidence the anger of the hurrying sea.

There are moments, alike of calm and storm, in the human journey, when the darkness of custom or the darkness of sorrow is illuminated by lights, which give for a moment some true idea of the Future, and—what is more—a power above all things needed to understand the Past. •

For we are self-deceivers, and a soul-subduing thought about some of our most determined actions is our ignorance of whence they are coming, and whither they tend. Yes; how ignorant we are, too often through long reaches of darkness or of shadow, of the true bearing of what we do! It is then (is it not?) a hope to cherish, that “at evening-time it may be light.”

Surely to each of us they have come, these momentary flashes—vivid moments, meteors of Eternity—revealing joy, revealing sorrow inexpressible, but always entering, oh! so seriously, into the responsibility of the soul. Characters have been misunderstood, misjudged; gloomy silences have been guarded when kind words ought to have been spoken; silly random talk has carried sorrow when what was needed was respectful silence; letters



have been posted that would have found a better resting-place in the fire; that wife has been cruel and unforgiving and hard to the husband sorrowing for his fault; that husband has been selfish and brutal in midst of the silent, self-denying tenderness of a loyal, unrepenting wife; that lover misdoubting and unfaithful in face of the loyalty and patience of the one who loved him; that father unreasonable with his son; that son inconsiderate and ungrateful in speech, paining his father; that lad at school reckless and thoughtless in face of his master's warnings; that schoolmaster suspicious and unfair towards the boy committed to his charge. Ah! the sorrows of that fair gift of Heaven—Love—hurt in an evil world! And *then* the awakening, the bitter penitence, the racking remorse, heart-gnawing regret, and, worst of all, the consciousness of debt owed to the living that can only now be paid to the dead! These moments, some of unspeakable sorrow; others, through sorrow, the harbingers of joy—like sunny mornings breaking amid rain—what are these but flashes illuminating the darkness of our self-deceiving, showing us things that *are*, as they are, not as they seem?

And the same in the deeper things of Eternity. Flashes illumine the darkness. Such a word spoken in chance conversation; such a text of Scripture read—apparently at random; such a passage in a book, depicting a scene of fiction, and stimulating conscience



by the likeness to ourselves; such a sudden thought, like Francis Borgia's by the dead queen's body, in lonely hour of waking in the still night; such a visit to a place once loved, long unseen—these have been used by the "loving spirit" to remind us of the significance of life, sometimes to change the whole course of the soul, and show us "what we are and whence we came." They may be only flashes, but they leave memories, and give hope of a fuller revelation when "at evening-time it shall be light."

*The* thing is, when light comes, use it. It may be passing flashes; it may be the first faint shaft of morning; it may be evening brilliance at the close of day. But cherish it. Set about it like men. Follow it, follow the streak of dawn. Look up. The old life of custom kept you in darkness; you kept your noses to the ground, selfish, self-interested—like dogs, only hunting out their game. Look up; see *life* before you. At least remember *this*. Remember what you saw in moments of illumination, and act on the remembrance, though the vision be gone. Yes; all may yet be well, if only we have the strength and courage to use the light. At least so far it is good if it startles us by hints of our real place—"strangers and pilgrims," beginning to learn the meaning of the language of our true home, and "declaring," first fearfully then "plainly," that "we seek a country"—"the land very far off." If so, it is because we begin to feel that we are dependent, not on

this so seeming solid and compact "world," material or mental, around us, but on One beyond, above ourselves—on God.

## II.

There are, among many, three forms of darkness which more or less envelop us all.

1. First, there is the darkness of supposed knowledge, when, in fact, we do not know. This is so dangerous, because so deceiving. "If the light," said our Master, "that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!" This was the danger of the Pharisee; this is his danger still. And Pharisaism is only that pride which is one of our inheritances from the Fall, raised—to use an image from mathematics—raised to its highest power. Hence it is, young man, that when you are young you are trenchant and swift with decisions, when, in fact, you are not fit to decide; hence that lack of thoughtfulness, of self-restraint, of moderation in mind and word, which alone can place you on the track of truth; hence those judgments, peremptory and severe, which close the windows to the incoming of the light. You have passed your day in this gloom, have you? Well, my brother fellow-sinner, get you to Calvary. What inscription *there* is evident in blood? "Them that are meek shall He guide in judgment: and such as are gentle, them shall He learn His way." For you, for you

if startled at the darkness of your knowledge, you learn this temper of the Cross—"at evening-time it shall be light."

I suppose this is at the root of half the unbelief that paralyses the moral vigour of the modern world, this the power that translates "difficulty" unnecessarily into "doubt." To have a conscientious "difficulty" is one thing, to make a peremptory conclusion of "doubt" from it is another. The one may be a trial, a discipline, a sorrow; the other is not improbably an act of pride, a sin. Men will not wait for God; all must be decided, and at once. They are in the habit, especially in an age that urges to perpetual action, of using, as they say, "common sense,"—that is, of acting only on a limited experience on things which lie beyond that limit. They think they have a right to know here and now, and so assume they *do* know; and, so assuming, turn their back on knowledge. Let them wait in humble patience; "at evening-time it shall be light."

2. Again, there is an "increasing" darkness from the effects of mortal sin.

The immediate result of mortal sin is practical moral and spiritual paralysis. If we do deliberately what we know to be contrary to the law of God, this follows: we become conscious of a loss of insight, conscious also of a flagging of power. We *know* too well that an opposing course is higher, truer; but we have ceased to *feel* that it is. The other world is distant; this world

is strong. The clearer lights of our immortal natures are dragged down, and quenched in darkness. We are walking, at the best, in shadow. We are certain now to trip and stumble right and left. My brother, be honest, is not this true? Have you ever deliberately done wrong without, at least for one moment, realising the truth of the words of a stern sad monitor within you, that you are lowered by the doing, and, in consequence, you cannot see?

There are moments, there are hours, which you scarcely like to remember, when such and such acts were done, which you condemned in the doing. They were illumined with the ghastly glow of burning passion, or tricked out in the gay livery of an evil world. They came, they went, bringing their mad pleasure, and saying soon in mockery "Good-bye." At the time, of course, you did not grasp their full significance; but now you feel their awful influence, and are forced, at least at times, to listen to their unresting reproach. Thoughts were thought, acts were done, which well you would like undone, unthought. It cannot be. We admitted them with full consent; and they have stamped their odious trade-mark on our character, and stored their terrible histories in the cells of undying recollection. That unmanly meanness, that disloyalty to principle and promise, that selfish cruelty, that degrading impurity, that hard calculating dishonesty, that hypocritical pretence—they roll their round in our



firmament, so to speak, like luminaries of gloom, throwing out shafts of darkness, as the sun sends his shafts of light. Is that your experience? Then I have this to say. Blessed are ye if ye are miserable in this consciousness; the "increasing" has not yet settled down into the "outer" darkness. You *know* that it is darkness in which you walk. Turn; look there! One Power can rescue you from the presences of evil that stalk through the gloom. Turn; look there! There is a Light! It is the pale figure of the Crucified. His arms are outstretched for the loving embrace. He calls you to look at *real* goodness, real blessing, clad in that garb of sorrow. He Who loves you has died for you and would guide you back. "The day is far spent;" "at evening-time there *may* be light." Go to Him, and the light grows stronger. Go, and He will give you penitence; penitent, He will wipe out that record, give you pardon, give you peace; pardoned, He will show the true significance of life, the path of progress. Do not hesitate, do not delay; "Christ will give you light."

3. There may be those before me who are in sincere struggle with deadly sin, who have sufficient humility also to realise their fallibility, and yet who are in danger of at least increasing the twilight in which their spirits are walking when they *might* be walking in the invigorating splendour of an advancing dawn.

There may be darkness for us, so it seems to me, from our mental build, from the very structure and

form of our minds. We gaze over an 'almost trackless ocean of mysterious thought when we think of the different temperaments, at starting, between mind and mind. Those whose chief desire seems to be to find fault with facts, and even blame their God, dwell on this by way of evading their own responsibility. This is always unfruitful, and often profane. Whatever the ultimate explanation of the mystery of *hereditary* virtue and *hereditary* fault, however puzzling the spectacle of some souls to whom virtue is much less difficult than to others, of many who appear hopelessly "handicapped" in the race of life ; yet these four things we know, and on these it is the part of wisdom, of truth, of reverence—which, indeed, is a form of truth—faithfully to act. First, to quarrel with facts, instead of facing, accepting, wisely using, and so, when evil, defeating—is to play the part of the wild bull of the prairie assaulting the engine steaming at its fiercest speed—is, in fact, to court the fate of a fool. Secondly, one first principle needs to be firmly fixed in the mind, as a precursor to all such discussion—God, by the very terms of His Being, is Goodness. God will not forget the inequality of opportunity ; the Judge of all the earth shall *do right*. Thirdly, it is a law of God's government, observable always, that we are bound together with strange but real ties ; that we do and must affect each other. Fourthly, that, say what we may of inherited evil, or the danger of other influence, or the difficulty of

virtue, we are, after all, not compelled to wrong-doing ; we *have* wills of our own ; we *are* free to choose. Remembering this, yet still one source of darkness is often our peculiar mental structure, revealing itself commonly either in prejudices or in moods of mind. To beware, then, of *mere* prejudice ; to form sound judgment, from earnest prayer and patient thought—this is as much a duty as to resist a temptation to lie or steal. That this is difficult who will deny ? Men there are who would part with valuable property more cheerfully than with an unreasoning prejudice ; and yet to cherish a habit of prejudice is to delay, at least, the breaking of the dawn.

And, then, have you ever thought of that mystery of mysteries—the moods of the human mind ? There is nothing wrong, indeed, in the existence of the ups and downs of feeling and sensation which more or less mark us all. The clouds chase the clouds across the mountains, and the sunlight, in varying degrees of changeful brightness, careers across the sea. We cannot always be at an unvarying level ; it is right, as it is human, that some hours should be in brightness and some in shadow ; but it is wrong when *this* department of our being is withdrawn,—as if it were a no-man's-land,—from the government of a self-controlling will.

Moods of mind ! who has not known them ? Just then the light came so clear, we seemed to see all mysteries and understand all truth ; we were able to walk unflinchingly along the corridors of darkness, and



wind our way through the labyrinth of despair. Then there came a shadow across our spiritual heavens. It grew to blackness. It was only a mood of mind. Only ! Is not that enough if we are not prepared for it ?—enough to daze, to trouble ? Enough it has been before now to make reason reel, when men have allowed it to close in upon them and darken the day. Strange mysteries ! The power of the pencil, the cunning of the chisel, the vigour of the brush,—these, in the keeping of Genius, have dashed them on canvas or imprisoned them in stone. Phidias, Angelico, Raphael have done it ; and in Literature, after the great dramatists, Browning above all. Genius may catch these flitting figures, but not we common people. Nevertheless, we have to deal with them and govern them, or they make us their slaves.

You had that bright afternoon, but now it has ended in a gathering storm. You were in, oh ! such a sunlight ! The clouds began to climb your heaven till they covered it. The sunlight now you have almost forgotten—for these are the clouds, not that water with cooling rain-drops, but that come, and bring no rain.

Do you wish for light ?—for yourself ? for others ? Do you desire to help a world that seems at times well-nigh in wreckage, and fellow-creatures who, amidst great realities, seem two-thirds asleep ? Would you be earnest, yet genial ; real, yet considerate ; vigorous, yet restrained ? Would you wish to be impressed with

your own ignorance, yet not paralysed when you ought to act?

This you want, then : light, light from God. See to it that you are guided by that lofty example of Him Whom joy never intoxicated nor sorrow subdued, in Whom sweetest thankfulness went hand in hand with firm endurance of trial, Whose whole life was governed by self-forgetting and lofty principle, and never for a moment a victim to a mood of mind.

Ah ! swaying, tottering soul, be not dazzled by life's glitter ; it will sink in shadow, be not afraid in darkness, it too will melt with the morning ; nay, hold on with firm principle and strong self-control—strong because trustful—and for you, too, “ at evening-time it shall be light.”

### III.

“ At evening-time it shall be light.”

Yes ; it is a law of Divine government to those who love God.

Life, after all, is a journey ; and there must be hours of shadow, and often hours of storm. Life is a training, a probation, and our Father is leading us on.

(1) Probably, sooner or later, to all of us, when really trying by grace to love and serve God, there comes disappointment. Can we complain ? This, this is part of man's heritage of trouble ; but more—it is a part of

the discipline by which he is trained for Eternity. We are disappointed in our old hopes and dreams, disappointed in others, disappointed at the chasm which yawns, and more and more clearly, between the actual and the ideal, disappointed also--and, above all things--disappointed with ourselves. The world which seemed to us, in the roseate glow of life's morning, a place so wide in reach and bewitching in beauty, is at best a chequered scene of struggle, at worst a very home of sin. Then comes the strong temptation to self-satisfied cynicism, to mere *ὕβρις*, to unfruitful, insolent scorn. Nothing is gained for ourselves or others by merely denouncing evil, instead of trying to fight it; by scorning and upbraiding sinners, who can only be won by trust and love. Lift up your hearts then, O disappointed ones! True, the old dream is vanished, but a fairer though sadder vision is before you; the self-pleasing romance has ended, but in earnest view of truth you will grow strong. Do not murmur; act and pray. Ah! indeed, if the glow of dawn be faded, yet "at evening-time it shall be light."

(2) Then there is Sor<sup>ow</sup>,—that terrible mystery, that well-attested fact. How you *treat* it is all-important, for it is one of God's most trusted messengers. It comes often suddenly, and has in it the force to revolutionise life, and to use with heart-piercing precision the painful power of change. It comes robed in mourning, swathed in the storm-cloud. It strikes

the heart with blow on blow. You cannot explain it, much less define; but there it is. Some may sympathise, others may pity; but *this, this* is an intimate, a personal matter, going deep into our being; the soul itself alone can quite understand. Try to stand on your feet after the first staggering blow, and do not misuse this terrible talent. Some under sorrow grow selfish, some discontented, some, alas! even hard. Brave heart, you must suffer; but *be* brave, look up, endure. Let the messenger Sorrow seize you; do not struggle and break away. Titian and Velasquez were *seized* by their subjects, and, so impressed, they caught and reproduced their meaning. Let sorrow say its say; have it out with it. It *has* a message from a better country. Oh! bitter message! Oh! sharp and terrible story!—and yet, and yet, if you will only wait, poor soul, with courage and tenderness, “at evening-time it shall be light.”

And what a light! No light so tender, so illuminating as that which shines on the faces of God’s children who from suffering have grown strong. These are they who carry comfort; these are they who preach the most subduing gospel; these are they who lighten dark hearts, and clear away the mists of sin, and comfort in the gloom of desolation; their faces are like the faces of angels, for they waited, in trust and patience through their darkness for the light.

(3) And then there is Death. Around that there



always appears the collecting of clouds. To some, however, death is more terrible than to others. Yes; to some who love God. These need not fear. To Him Who was Lord of life, was it not terrible? "Exceeding sorrowful". His soul was, in view of the last great struggle. Bitter, terrible as that deathbed, and dismal as His hour of dereliction, yet the human soul, still trusting, bore it; and then came the cry of resignation and confidence, and at evening-time there was light. Fear death? Yes; but not without trusting. Cling, cling in faith to your Father, to your Redeemer, and "at evening-time there shall be light."

#### IV.

Christ, then, is the Light of the world, and the summing up, on the Cross of His constancy, gives to each of us the hope that that light may be ours. For the Passion of our Redeemer, that most solemn of all scenes—the deathbed of the Undying—comes home to us, if we fix the eye of faith upon it, as a powerful illuminator.

First, because it is the highest manifestation of those principles which ruled that life that has been "the Light of the world." It—it, above all—has taught us this: the folly of self-conceit; the madness, in the mysteries of life, of "*leaning* on our own understanding;" the duty of keeping wide awake to the possibility, the pro-

bability, of fatal mistakes, unless we keep near God ; the need of an unselfish and simple purpose, of some deep sense within us of our proper place as creatures, and some practical action thereon. The Passion reveals this, that, however much we may choose to believe the contrary, however quick our perceptions and powerful our understandings, in darkness we shall live, in increasing darkness we shall die, unless we learn humility, self-sacrifice and surrender to God's will.

Again, the Passion guarantees the promises of Christ. How constantly He dwelt on human blindness, how strongly He promised the gift of light, the reader of the New Testament cannot fail to know. Blessed it is to realise that He Who showed the path of life showed it to the end. Surely He Who for us went to *that* extremity can never fail in any promise. And this we need here and now. How often, amid the tumult and the darkness of life—like the restless, aimless fugitive amid the hot, falling ashes of Pompeii—how often the Christian wanders, with hopeless sighing, half stunned by the confident cannonading of conceited unbelief, and will not watch the breaking of the clouds ! Look up, faint heart ; any fool can catalogue difficulties ; look up in pity for their folly, and see the stretching lines of glory. He has promised,—and guaranteed His promise by His Passion—“ at evening-time there shall be light.”

And the Passion illuminates by its rich suggestive-

ness. In fact, despite the material darkness at the crucifixion, all about the Cross was light. Here was thrown into telling contrast that constantly recurring picture—appearance and reality. Here was an *apparent* victory of Chief Priests, Scribes, and Sadducees—of an outbreak of vilest passions and a conspiracy of crime,—while in truth the world was witnessing the triumph of a Suffering, henceforth to *rule* in great measure, and always to *effect* the world. We too, when sick with the *apparent* victory of bad or questionable principle, may turn to the Cross, and recall the unchanging truth: “Though hand join in hand, yet shall wickedness not be unpunished.”

Or are we tempted to be weary of serious effort, and “let things drive”? Do we imagine that to be indifferent will save us trouble, will be more like “the way of the world;” will, in fact, do as well? We turn to the fact of Calvary. The *apparent* vanishes, the *real* stands out, like white-peaked Carrara, against a sky of azure brilliance—stands out sharp and plain. Haphazard in life is folly; “as a man sows, so shall he also reap.”

Are we drawn imperceptibly into the whirl of things?—doing duty it may be faithfully, fearlessly, but valuing this life too much for its self-pleasing returns, treating it as useful only for itself? We turn to the Passion, and the light of life and death on the face of Jesus says clearly, “Seek eternal things.”

Do we think to *satisfy* the soul with self-seeking?



That strong, stern self-surrender of the Cross warns—  
 O that in time you may listen to its warning!—  
 warns of the inevitable weariness, ennui, or *tedium*  
*vite*—call it what you may—which at last has dogged  
 the steps of those who have lived for self, which at last  
 has murdered the peace of men who will not learn the  
 uses of this *one* life given to each—the value of this  
 vast, this short opportunity. •

For, indeed, the Cross shows this: the vileness and  
 degradation of self-seeking, the nobility and fruitfulness  
 of self-sacrifice. It reminds us that “we are  
 not our own, we are bought with a price;” that we  
 are members of a body, and that our goodness or our  
 badness must affect, not ourselves alone, but others;  
 that to ourselves indeed, first, and in immeasurable  
 degree, our character is of importance, but that also  
 it is, it must be, of power for others—power of evil  
 or of goodness. Hence is suggested the deep desire  
 of light to see the faults that gradually corrode the  
 soul, to see that we may slaughter, and to use the  
 experience—blessed or bitter—of successes or failures  
 in the Past, for advance and victory in the Future.  
 Blessed, blessed are ye, if so, in the silence of the  
 soul ye have been using the great bequest of His  
 sorrow; for you, most surely, “at evening-time it shall  
 be light.”

## V.

Here, then, is the sum of it all. We are in sore need of light. For, indeed, there is nothing much more startling than the thought of the immense possibilities of knowledge which lie beyond our actual, personal possession, unless it be the boundless possibilities of error which form part of our unassisted lot.

We are, or ought to be, in battle with a "World," which puts eternity far off, which minimises the danger of evil, and lowers the thought of God. In its atmosphere flourish the sophistries with which impatient, proud, unenlightened reason confuses and blurs the tremendous mysteries of the Christian Faith; from it comes the temper that heaps up difficulties, and destroys the patience and prayer through which alone they can be solved.

We are, or ought to be, in battle with the Flesh,—no overstrained or morbid contest with pure affections and noble emotions, but real struggle with misdirected desire.

We are, or ought to be, in struggle with Satan—that (so to speak) incarnate representative of falsehood and unlove.

These enemies are powers of darkness; and there comes One among us to show us where we are, teaching us the danger of light thoughts of Eternity, of carelessness, of cynicism, of despair; the danger of

sneering at devotion, disregarding religion, and worshipping self. There comes One among us, pointing—by His tenderness to the weak, by His home affections, by His sweetness to little children, by His kindness to lost women—to the beauty of love and self-forgetting, and forbearance and pity; pointing by His self-conquest to the evil of unrestrained desire; teaching men plainly the need of self-sacrifice, the sacredness of duty, the responsibility attaching to the power of the transmission of life. There comes One, leaving a life behind Him, emphasised by the dignity of His death, Who has illuminated the world with a type of character towards which we may—we must—aspire.

He gives us light. Amid the varying currents of self-seeking He brings into distinctness the great thoughts which must never be forgotten: God, Religion, Trial, Temptation, Advance of Character, Responsibility, Grace in Time of Need, Judgment, Eternity. Whatever else *appear* of value, these are of real and unspeakable importance when viewed in the light of the Cross.

And this light is offered to all,—the newspaper boy, the lost woman, the high-born peer, the hardworking politician, the diligent merchant, the ambitious cabinet minister, the toiling clergyman, the busy housemaid, the light-hearted labouring lad, the ill-paid daily governess, the anxious, overburdened mother, the young man entering life, wayward, hopeful, thoughtless, and with

no experience of sorrow—before all these stands the Crucifix, stripping life of its accidents, displaying its serious meaning, teaching the beauty of strength and goodness, the value of solid religion, full of serious warning, but a very beacon-light of hope.

• VI.

Learn then, learn its lesson. Look for and follow the light.

I have done. Tell me, ere we part; tell me, father, in this congregation, what do you look for with deepest anxiety when your boy comes home to you from college, from school? Are you *most* anxious about his place in his division, and his mastery of the special subject of his study? It is good, of course; but it is not all. I hope, I suppose, that, as a true man, your deepest anxiety, your most earnest prayer, is for his growth of character, his loyalty to truth and purity, and duty, his advance in unselfishness, his maintenance of unsoiled and ennobling affections, his faithfulness to principle, his hatred of what is wrong. You hope and pray, with trembling anxiety you watch and notice, that your lad may have kept the ennobling love of home in the midst of a debasing world, guarded a pure and manly character amid the enticing temptations of the flesh, and turned a deaf ear to the devil's

seductions, which would lead him from uprightness and honour and love. You hope, in a word, that he has been kept true to goodness, true to God. This is right, this is noble, this is the thought of a true man.

Now, act so about *yourself*. So God, your Father, is yearning over you. O let not Him have the heart-ache that would crush you if you had an undutiful, an ungrateful son!

And you, young men, my brothers, look to it what you are doing. Life is before you. Brave hearts, fear not though darkness envelop you; look up, look up to the Cross. Go for forgiveness, if ye have sinned, to your Redeemer; go for guidance to the principles of the Passion. "Strangers and pilgrims," you may begin to learn the language of your better country; if you keep your eye fixed on the value of Religion; if you *want* to see your path, and so pray for guidance; if you maintain humility, and by grace keep yourselves pure, — rays from the Cross will break through the darkness, and He will "send out His light and His truth, that they may lead you," and bring you to His holy hill, and to His dwelling of peace.



## The Hope of Strength.

*'In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able also to succour them that are tempted.'*—HEB. II. 18.

WE have seen, dear friends, that on this point there can be little room for controversy—that the world of mankind, that we ourselves are, in great measure, plunged in darkness—darkness, too, we are forced to confess, of our own creating—the darkness that follows the pride of knowledge in those who do not know; and the darkness that follows permitted sin, which possesses the dire prerogative of clouding the conscience and blunting the moral sense; darkness also springing in each soul from something difficult to define, something individual and specially our own, from that which is peculiar to our build of mind.

They who are tossed on the Atlantic in a night of sounding storm; they who wander on the unpitying mountains when the mists have wrapped their death-shrouds round the wanderer, and the eye can see no guiding glimmer, though the ear can hear the angry roar of the thunderous torrents and the piercing

screams of the tormented winds,—these, these wait not so eagerly for the morning as the soul of the sinner, wakened towards Eternity, watches the Mystery of the most holy Passion, guarantee and evidence of the love of God for His erring creatures, of the Interest of the Redeemer in fallen man.

Looking, then, through the darkness, the soul sees a hope of light. *There* is the light of a splendid example; there, too, the light of exact decision; there the light, also, of powers provided and principles bequeathed.

Christ in the Passion has given us light,—light by the revelation of mysteries, light by the spirit in which He did His work and bore His pain; but the Passion of our Master—this is the point before us at this moment—has, among many things, done one thing more.

There is yet another hope provided by the Passion, of priceless value to us all. The third great consolation of the Cross is this: the hope—to the man who is in earnest—that he may have strength, strength for the struggle, strength also to persevere to the end.

## I.

My brethren, there can be no question of the truth of this assertion, that life is a battle. We are engaged, we Christians know it—most certainly we are engaged—in an anxious, an almost continuous conflict. In this



often appearances deceive. However calm the apparent scene before us, beneath the calm is struggle. The peaks of the Apennines of Campania are firm and calm against the unclouded azure, but beneath, is the struggle of volcanic fire. The sea sleeps smooth in the dreamy caves of Capri, but beneath, the currents travel with contending speed. The social system of human life works on with even, regulated motion; but underneath what funds and forces of sorrow and misery, of selfishness and self-denying, fierce upspringings of Life and furious forces of attacking Death. Sometimes the human face is restrained and placid, little revealing the backward, forward sway of struggle—the scene of dire defeat and splendid victory—the conflict in the soul. Life is a battle. Ah! how the struggle leaves its mark behind!—so scarred, so wounded the soul is, it hardly recognises its former self. Is that deep thoughtful face, that firm determined step, that sad yet steady gaze, that smile so bright, and yet thrown out into distinctness by the hidden sadness behind it, as sunshine blazing through a bank of cloud,—is that of the same who, merry, joyous, light-hearted, careless, went dancing on with smiles of sunny sweetness, and voice of music like the morning birds—to whom no care, no sorrow, no determined purpose even, seemed akin, whom we knew long ago? The same, only that strength and sorrow have come in life's battle.

Look at that man,—busy, earthly, heartless; smiling

contempt on deep feelings, cynical and scornful towards religion, sharp for self-interest, hardened in the world's ways. Is that the lad of years ago, so bright and beautiful, with high hopes and warm affections, who could love deeply and enjoy purely, and be generous and brave? Alas! the same. Beaten in the soul's battle, he is not a conqueror, but a slave.

Oh! *must* souls perish? Oh! *must* young hearts of such fair promise be so destroyed? Oh! must the sun of life's fairest morning set always in a night of drizzling gloom? No, Christ of the Five Wounds; no! By Thy power there may be victory in the fierce conflict of the life of the soul. Life is a battle. Pause, my brothers, pause and think. Certainly one of the most important questions is: "Which side are *you* taking in this unceasing struggle?" And the next question is: "How—having taken the side of Right—how are you going on?"

In view, then, of the struggle in which we must play our part between good and evil, it is important, I contend, for serious souls to face facts and subscribe to a solemn decision, viz., that the last and greatest calamity is not loss of health, nor loss of fortune, nor loss of reputation, nor loss of friends; not the fading of cherished hopes, and the failure of long-loved intentions; not the low beating of once throbbing pulses, nor the sadness of an ever-deepening loneliness, as the human pilgrim stands aside, while the loved and

yearned-for *things* beyond him in dim procession to the grave ; but that the last calamity and greatest is voluntarily to enrol one's-self in the armies, or to glide in gradually to the ranks of evil, of darkness, to serve as a soldier under the banner of Death. Come to this decision ; see and determine ; the worst misfortune is to take the side of what is wrong.

And this also ; decide this with positive determination, that the best of all things is not to gain name or fame or fortune ; not to win the love, even though deserved, of those you love and prize and honour ; not to make money, to succeed in enterprise, get on in life—but the best of all things is to be unflinchingly decided at all costs, God helping you, to take the side of goodness, to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with your God. Have you done it, my brother ? Are you doing it ? If not, by His mercy, do it now.

Well, if so deciding, let us ask the question, What then ?

Well, first, we must face the possibility of many failures ; and next and surely, invasions of trial ; and lastly, if the right means we use, the certainty of final success. Yes ; if you are determined to take the side of right, and do your duty, through many mistakes you will grow rich in accumulated experience. You may have to look back, from time to time, at reaches of life which fill you with astonishment at your folly, and

with shame at your cowardice; still, abiding in the main principles of truth and duty, still, using the means for strength and struggle, one thing is certain—you will suffer. No growth without struggle, no victory without pain.

Brethren, it is an era in life when in interior determination the resolve of the will is offered to God: "Very well; I may suffer, but *I will* serve God, *I will* do right."

Now, one step further. No great thing is won without sacrifice; least of all, the greatness of a noble character. If life is a battle, if we are determined to take the side of right, if therefore we must bear the strain of sacrifice; if in heart and desire we are ready for this surrender,—again I ask, What then? Well, then, one thing is needed beyond light, beyond forgiveness: the supreme need of the soul is Strength.

## II.

Brethren, there is nothing gained either by shutting our eyes to the difficulties, nor yet by exaggerating the dangers, of the Christian life. What we really want is the truth. It is all very well to look at the easy flow of the commonplace, but the realities are stern. The Bay of Baïæ smiled in sunshine—warm, luxuriant, like the garden of God. How easy and bright it looked in the



fair spring morning, with the mountains shading off into every hue of violet velvet, with the air vibrating only to the soft music of the murmuring sea. What did all those sparkling villas, those gay shining galleys, really mean? The surrender of principle, the conquest of cruelty, the triumph of sin. What did the old man Paul, landing at Puteoli, lonely and a prisoner, out of all sympathy with the smiling scene around him—what did he represent? Strength in struggle, toil, and labour, and at last, after a life of love and courage, a consummate victory. The Christian life has indeed interior sunlight; but right and duty mean sorrow, and often great self-sacrifice; and yet, and yet it is fair to remember, Paul lived and died in joy, when Nero first suffered as a slave of self, and then cringed in terror before a dishonoured death. All is not lost by being a Christian, though much is sacrificed; though much is clung to by a worldling, all is not gained. But this we need in order to face immediate struggle—strength, brothers, strength.

### III.

This, dear friends, is needed, for in the conflict between good and evil there are at least three trials for the soul.

1. First there is the trial of suffering.

What is suffering? To suffer is to feel in our inmost

being the sharp wounds of the mystery of pain ; to feel it while yet it neither suspends consciousness nor destroys life ; to feel it with its mystic power of reinforcement from repetition of its blows, with its full play of anguish derived from the force of memory, the power of prevision, the consciousness of time. For pain is only raised to the dignity, or, if you like, degraded to the depth, of *suffering* in the creature who has time, memory, foresight, uniting in storing up and preserving in intensity of activity each blow which otherwise would, as with the "beasts that perish," pass swiftly by.

What is suffering indeed ? The state of a living soul whose forces of mind and body combine to darken the sun and drain to drought the refreshing clouds ; to destroy the springs of happiness and efface the fair visions of youth ; to make earth a home of torment, and draw a curtain, thick and impenetrable, across the face of the heavens ; the state of a soul, blasted, like the riven oak, by the fire of circumstance, yet intensely conscious of its doom. Whatever the cause be, whatever the occasion, still in suffering, the soul—the human soul—is at full strength of its powers of endurance, of life, of misery, and of sorrow.

It may be the Nessus shirt ; it may be the finger at Belshazzar's feast ; it may be disappointment, bitter, unbroken, in another ; it may be an obscure result of dreadful death ;—the causes may be different, but a suffering soul stands, individually alone, inward-driven,



with its forces strained to tension, and with this certainty—either, broken, it will sink to lower levels, or rise to new heights of spiritual being, if, suffering, it has been *strong*.

Suffering! Who can define it? who explain? *Explain* the sense of peace in the presence of those in whom our trust is secure; *explain* the magic of the touch, the glance, of one we love; *explain* the desolation of parting; *explain* the anticipated joy, after parting, of meeting once more. So may you *define* the condition of a human heart in anguish; so may you *explain* the mystery of tears.

Suffering! Brave men, for the bravest this is hard to bear and use in ourselves; harder when we know not how to help in others.

Have you ever waited the night through to watch or help, or hold and soothe, a dying child?

Have you stood by your fellow-man in those strange hours—reversing all life's promise—which precede the end? with the cold sweat on your own brow, watched the unmeasured anguish? Heard the slow ticking of the clock, when each beat marked a world of misery? Knelt by the lifeless form at last, blessed God the threshold of the grave at last was crossed, and wondered *how* a soul could so endure?

Have you known the strength of real love? the sorrow of parting? the bitterness of disappointment? the hopelessness of regret?

Ah ! world of sorrow ! How many hearts are daily breaking ! how many men toil on in patient silence, for whom the brighter hope seems gone !

Suffering you cannot measure nor define ; but *this* the Christian teacher knows : it is a trial, a means of education, it may be a path—God Who knows and loves may see it as *the* path—for the training of the soul. What we want, then, in suffering, in sorrow, is *strength*,—strength of mind, of will, of principle, to do right in the day of darkness, and “having done all to stand.”

2. And then *strength* is needed, because we have the trial, the fierce trial, of *temptation*. Here is indeed a mystery. What do we know of it ?

(1) It is not from God, any more than sin and sorrow are from Him, although He Who “out of darkness bringeth light,” out of temptation brings blessing to those who endure. On this Scripture is distinct.

Time and opportunity for choice, God of course, has given, must give, to His creatures, if they are to be truly free, capable of moral and meritorious acts. Man is therefore, of course, on his trial. Indeed, without it no advance, no growth, no perfection ; and surely if we are in this life for one thing, it is to grow by trial to the fulness of Divine manhood, to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

But temptation is a distinct trial arising out of a fallen state. Scripture and the Church, and—may we

not add?—spiritual experience, wisely noted, thoughtfully used—these are not silent as to the sources of temptation.

My brothers, it is wise to recall them, if we are to realise our need of strength.

(2) There is that awful personality, Satan, on whose activity in tempting man Holy Scripture speaks so plainly.

It is useless wasting time in asking why such a being is permitted to exist; we may go on to the insoluble question, why is evil allowed at all; none can answer, and to quarrel with facts is to drive one's head against a wall. Evil is not a thing, it is a negation. It is the attitude of a created will opposing the conditions of goodness and the law of God,—a law, remember, never arbitrary, but the expression of God's necessary perfection. That there is one creature supremely opposed to Goodness we know—that is Satan.

Anterior to human history the great struggle began, and the war waged when "Michael and his angels fought with the dragon," that war between light and darkness is continuing still. Satan is a being of vast intelligence, of a power superhuman, and of a will drenched in malice and bent on evil. He is about us and near to us, in his own person, or in the persons of his myrmidons; and he is bent, so far forth as he can, on our destruction.

He is not self-existent; he has fallen from a high

estate by his own deliberate choice. Though powerful, he is not all-powerful, much less invincible. He can be conquered. He is a liar. His great work is to deceive, to inspire with error, to misrepresent God. He is at the root of heresies and false religions, and he is of immense cleverness in creating and magnifying difficulties in the truth. He is a murderer. Love—the bond between man and man, between man and God—he loves to dissolve. Hatred, malice, anger, evil-speaking, covetousness, lust, pride, are dear to him; and the love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, trustingness, meekness, self-restraint, which are the fruits of God's Spirit, are his abhorrence. His intelligence is enriched by a lengthened experience and acute observation, and the means for our ruin he has planned and studied with scientific accuracy. He seems to have power over some portions of our nature more than others,—to affect our moods, our imagination, our lower appetites. The thought of this makes us humble, on our guard, and trustful in God.

But certain it is that Satan can *force* no entry, nor compel us to do wrong. He cannot directly affect our understanding, nor move our will. His only hope is temptation. He can try to seduce; without our consent, he can never prevail.

There is this further blessed thought: into the soul, much less into the soul rich with Divine grace, he can never himself penetrate. He can observe, speculate,



make ventures; but his speculations as to the lie and bent of souls are sometimes wrong. He is not omniscient nor infallible; and, however crafty he be in enticing, he never can *compel*.

Christ and his Church—her mysteries, her Sacraments, her supernatural endowments, her powerful weapons, her prevailing forces of prayer—are still to him in great measure hidden; seducing souls to himself, he may—he does—make them share his blindness. Hence so many of the random, conceited, foolish things said of Religion, for, indeed, “the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God;” and so in proportion as you are true to your Master and “in Christ,” you are a puzzle and perplexity to Satan. How often has the simplicity of a child checkmated the craft of the Evil One!

Again, you ask, “But why was he permitted to be at all? Why, why is he permitted now to attack souls?”

Here, at any rate, are suggestions which help to an answer:—(1) Fully we do not know, and it is part of our trial to wait in this, as in much else, in patience, trusting our heavenly Father to have done the best for us, and being sure that one day “we shall know even as we are known.” (2) The difficulty is no greater than the difficulty of the existence of *any* bad and powerful man, placed in a position of influence—a Robespierre, an Alexander Borgia, a Tiberius—able

and willing to injure his fellow-men. (3) All we can say of the mystery of evil is—without the *possibility* of fall, no free-will; without free-will, no moral probation; without moral probation, no opportunity of virtue, of merit, of goodness, of sanctity. The rest we leave with God—and wait.

(3) We have, indeed, this foe, a source of temptation. We are, however, surrounded by an *atmosphere* of evil, as well as attacked by a person. There is a tradition of thought and feeling, an intellectual and moral mode of viewing all things, which has arisen out of the thousand thoughts and plans of fallen man, darkened and poisoned by the influence of Satan, which Scripture calls “the world.” Society—it has been wisely said somewhere—is of course, of God’s appointment, but its manner of thought and feeling has been debased and depraved. A temper, a habit of thought, a way of looking at things, a fashion of dealing with things in which God, the Soul, Eternity, are kept entirely out of sight—this, this is “the world.” It gets into our hearts, but also it acts upon us from without; it can insinuate itself into all occupations and all subjects; it is like a corroding acid; it can corrupt and destroy. Its tendency is to lower the idea of God, to minimise the danger of sin, to make us careless about religion, and impatient of spiritual things. It fixes the eye on this life. It is a very workshop for fashioning evil. It ridicules enthusiasm. It persecutes goodness if it fails



to seduce. It insinuates that *it* is the school of wisdom; it poses as a pattern of prudence; it preaches as the apostle of common-sense.

Pause, my brother, pause. When hatred, malice, untruth possess you, you know that the devil is at your elbow. When you are inclined to forget God, to think lightly of religion, to allow natural laziness to hinder you in religious duty, and hold you back in sacraments and prayer; when you prefer a lower to a higher standard, and allow yourself to join in the laugh, the scoff, the sneer at religious earnestness,—beware, beware! You are falling victim to another enemy; “the world” is about. The world outside the limits of Christendom is the very breath men breathe; hence the dense darkness of false religions; and it has even crept into and corrupted souls in the Christian Church. We, we have renounced it, but its influence on us is constant, with Satan, the prince of it, applying it with assiduity and craft. This is the second source of temptation.

(4) And then there are powers of darkness within us—the forces of unregulated desire. The possession of desire is not wrong. But desire unregulated and turbulent becomes the “passion” of the “flesh.”

It has been said with truth that theologians do not need to teach “the Fall” as a doctrine; it is evidently, undeniably, a fact. There is a corruption of nature. Vice is easy, virtue is difficult. A darkness has come over the understanding, a wild warp in the affections,

and a vacillation and weakness in the will. Man *inclines* to evil. Here, too, here is that "mind of the flesh," whose works, as St. Paul says, are so "manifest" and so terrible. This, too, is a source of temptation.

This, then, you know, O child of God: you have entered the battle of life, you have begun the race for the prize; you must be tempted. All men are, and must be; and no temptation will take *you* that is not common to man.

It matters not what your work in life is—*that* is the accident of your probation. Farm labourer or literary man, quiet clergyman, or statesman on whom are the eyes of the world, worker in a factory, or boy at school,—your particular calling is *your* exercise-ground, *your* opportunity of trial, *your* field of battle; but not the knowledge you acquire or the work you do is *in itself* the important thing. *The* important thing is, how your character is being formed, how virtues are being strengthened and faults being conquered; how you are getting nearer heaven or nearer hell—how, in fact, you are bearing yourself in the battle, and meeting the temptation which *must* be yours.

Must be yours! Yes; the devil, with his powerful auxiliaries, "the world" and "the flesh," will find opportunities for temptation. In your books, in your work, in your friends, in your associates, in your occupations, in your amusements, in your religious

exercises, in your labour, in your rest; ever and anon will the trial come of your allegiance to truth and duty, or your cowardly surrender to what is wrong. Temptation must come. But—do not forget it—temptation is not sin. It is akin to sin, it may lead to sin; but, unless you *consent* to it of your own free choice, it is not, nor need ever be, sin.

Further still, temptation, when by God's help it is resisted, is still *trial*.

It is easy to hold false opinions, easy to doubt the faith, easy to give way to lust, easy to take part in vile conversation, easy to join a multitude to do evil, easy to act on the code the world lays down, just as it is easy to submit to the external demands of false religions—like the religions of the Eastern world,—which ask no exercise of living faith, and never touch the heart; but it requires *strength* and *suffering* to resist evil. Viewed from the standpoint of your weak human nature, it is hard to be a Christian.

Blessed thought—our Master has gone through the struggle and knows the difficulty: "Having suffered being tempted, He is able also to succour them that are tempted."

Further yet, temptation may be the source of unspeakable blessing. Resistance to temptation strengthens character; it purifies the soul; it makes the power of God's grace a matter not of religious doctrine, but of personal experience; it enables us to

help others in danger; it draws us nearer to God. Yes; and it places us within range of that Divine benediction: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, the Lord shall give him the crown of life, which He has prepared for them that love Him."

Young man, my brother, I pause to ask, How are you fighting your battle? Fought it must be if you are to conquer, for your enemies are real. Do not trust *yourself*. Bad companions, bad influences, the terrible forces of our own corrupt hearts—these are enough to throw us open to the fiercest temptation, unless we keep near God. Solomon had immense intellectual capacity—yes; and a mind too, endowed with gifts of Divine wisdom—but he fell through his affections, tempted by uncontrolled desire. Judas had opportunities of unrivalled value in his daily intercourse with Christ, but he submitted to the crafty seductions of a mean and corrupting passion, and obeyed the voice of "the world." Louis XV. rose from a bed of sickness, given back to the prayers of a nation, hailed as the "*bien aimé*," the well-beloved, but he surrendered to the enticements of a sensual nature and a worldly court, and went at last, execrated by an oppressed and ruined people, to a miserable and unlamented grave.

• And you and I, you and I—we, too, have to remember that in each of us is a brute that must be tamed and kept in order, and possibilities of sin almost



fathomless, unless we use prayer and watching, unless we cling close to our Master, unless we have *strength* from above.

Ah ! my brothers, in the trial of temptation we need strength, strength from God.

In the "trial of temptation"! And yet we must not forget how great a blessing temptation may become, and that strength to meet it is needed, not merely to avoid sin, but that it may have its perfect work. Doubtless under *some* temptations we are sure of some failure, but with prayer and watching we need "not greatly fall;" and if there has been failure it is possible, by a brave acknowledgment of fault, by that sterling strength which enables us neither to attempt to palliate nor attempt to hide, it is possible to gain deeper humility, to form wiser and firmer resolutions, and to watch with a more consistent perseverance for the recurrence of trial.

It is our duty to avoid temptation if we can ; to meet it humbly, fearlessly, prayerfully, if it cannot be avoided ; and to determine and strive, if met it must be, that before it we will not succumb.

For temptation resisted is indeed *the* means of training character. Principles pass from the region of the ideal into the region of the actual, from forms of thought into part of *ourselves*, when they have stood the fire of unsuccessful temptation. The wild flowers of the mountains have a tenderer tone and a more stalwart

strength after they have borne the unrelenting blast and rooted themselves in the unrelenting stone. Loyalty is noble when it has stood the test of danger, and withstood the bribes of self-interest; affection is of priceless value when it has borne the strain of distance and of time; tenderness of heart and strength of character—the fairest gifts of fallen man—are only perfect when they have resisted these fierce daily temptations, so powerful alas! with frail humanity in pulling down high things, in destroying the fairest flowers of human goodness, in breaking the strongest purposes, and in corrupting the purest heart. Temptation, if resisted, is a blessed discipline, but oh! how severe a trial! Ah! how could one weep to think of lives once lovely lowered and devastated by unconquered temptation, how the heart aches to remember, if only it had been resisted, what they might have been! Strength is what is needed; where shall it be sought for? Turn to the Passion; see written in that face of unflinching resolve and heart-piercing sorrow, “He will give strength and power unto His people; blessed be God.”

I do not suppose there is a man among us who has not been tempted; nay, probably not one who has not, in some measure, failed. This trial is universal; it lurks in everything—in our books, our friends, our pursuits, our business, our pleasures—and we must be prepared for it to the end.

3. There is, however, another trial, of which we are



as totally inexperienced as we are, alas ! well experienced in temptation. There is the trial of Death.

Of that we have had no experience, but that we *shall* have is certain. The moment is coming, coming steadily, when we shall begin to feel all that *seemed* so real, fading down to the attenuated consistency of a dream ; when all that *seemed* so distant is becoming the sternest of realities. No more crowds around us, no more friends to support us, but we and God *alone*. Death is the entrance to the eternal world ; it has much about it sweet to the weary, and blessed to the Christian ; but natural feeling and Holy Scripture combine in representing it as very serious and very dreadful. Somehow it dogs the steps of sin ; somehow the Evil One gained "the power of death ;" somehow, to displace his throne and wreck his sway, the death of Christ was a necessity. To meet this, too, dear friends, the bravest of us stands in need of *Strength*.

#### IV.

Now, mark, the Passion helps us first as an example. We learn, as we see that spectacle, that it is a law which governs life, that crises are prepared for by steady, persevering endurance ; that the concentrated strength of well-borne trial will at last overwhelm evil, and bear us to victory.

It was all very well for that strange silence of the people to be maintained in Sicily, while Charles of Valois governed with brutality, and showed no pity; while women were insulted and men were murdered, with no hand raised to stay the tyrant. But when the crisis came, the strength accumulated in long endurance did its work, and the night of Santo Spirito, the tragedy of the Sicilian Vespers, was the witness of the passionate strength of a people strong to overthrow evil, gained by enduring long.

The Passion strengthens us—it may be paradoxical, it is true—by teaching that strength is a duty. Amid the troubles of an overwrought age and a hurrying civilisation which taxes men's self-control, I believe that madness before now has been, at least, accelerated by disregarding in the opening moments of severe mental trial the *duty* to be strong. Not one of us has a right to "let himself go," or even to listen obediently to the whisper of evil, "It is too much trouble," or "To try is no use." It is false; believe it not. No, trouble is too much for right-doing; it is always of use to "try again."

It is a duty to be strong. Even when sin has had *some* triumph over us, still within us there is a deep and sure witness that if we will we *can*. Even in such cases we *can* confess our sin, *can* try again, *can* start afresh if we please; if we please, God's grace will always avail. Ah! my brother, you may be weak—probably

you are—but look at the Crucifix on Calvary. Your Saviour teaches you it is possible for you, and therefore it is your *duty*, to be strong

For the Passion gives us an immense encouragement; we are assured in it of the sympathy of Christ. All things are easy if we are not treated with a hardness which refuses to realise our real difficulties; but, whilst taught to do our duty unflinchingly, are allowed to know that the highest, the bravest, the most strong and tender sympathises with the difficulties in our way. Christ, Who knows our weakness and our treachery, “loves us,” feels with us, “better than He knows.” Having “suffered” Himself, being tempted, “He is able also to succour them that are tempted.”

And the Passion, standing out as the prelude to the Resurrection, gives us strength by providing a living hope. Here is no mere subtlety of argument, or strength of teaching; but an act, objective, real, practical. He died in agony, strong to the end, and He rose. As the Master, so the servant. We too, dying with Him, with Him may share the victory.

And finally, the Passion, above all, has its great and secret power. It is the source of grace. Without the grace of God, nothing can be done; but with it, anything. How are the cruel made tender, the hardened rendered human? how are the lazy endued with indomitable energy, the ungoverned gifted with self-control? how are those who never felt for others made

more considerate than a closest friend? how do the ill-tempered grow into sunny sweetness, and the rude and boisterous become courteous and kind? how has the vacillating won determination, and the inconstant gained firm faithfulness? Greatest of all forces, mightiest of all powers, this has been placed at man's disposal—this, God's grace, this, too, the product of the Passion.

Oh! then, my brothers, upward and onward! Do duty; stand unshaken; be strong. Death will come; practise strength by using God's grace; you will be ready. Suffering, in God's power, you will endure, and in that which is even more terrible, more constant, and maybe so blessed—in temptation—look to the Crucified; use the grace He offers; turn from temptation; act, though action be painful; cry with faith and penitence, and you will never cry in vain.

Remember, then, in closing, this.

The first step to strength is to know our danger and act accordingly. Believe at least in Socrates, if you do not attend to Christ. An unexamined, an unregulated life, we learn from him, is not worth living.

It was a fierce night of storm and darkness as we swept along the inhospitable coast of Africa, with beyond us the wild forces of tempest, and by us a dark lee-shore. The sudden squalls rushed down the gullies in the mountains, and the threatening clouds in bewil-



dering blackness gathered thicker hour by hour in the sky. Comparatively smooth slept the waters under the headlands, and certainly in the open sea the storm was strong. There was some temptation to hug the more sheltered coast-land, though danger certainly was there. Wisdom said, Push out into the open; take the consequences; face the storm.

So with life. Be not a coward; fly temptation, which is truest courage; or face it, if so it must be; but breast the trouble, fight the battle; do not by sin purchase a dreamy peace. Be strong, my brother, be strong.

And here I close.

When in our more serious moments we consider calmly our life beyond the grave—its immeasurable extent, if measured by our present conceptions of Time; its utterly unimagined wonders, its vast possibilities, the way in which Scripture connects our condition *then* with our action *now*, the terrible forces here meant to retard our progress, the Divine mercy by which hindrances may be made paths of advance and means of achievement—then, indeed, we begin to realise how important it is to keep before us the *real* meaning of our present probation, never to forget the true significance of life, ever to bear in mind the intensity of our weakness, the wisdom of humility, the need of strength, and the love and helpfulness of God. O that, undeceived by the lying voice of the Evil One, unsuspected by the attractions of the world, unseduced by the en-

ticements of wild desire, we may have grace to keep alive within us the hope set before us, and "purify ourselves, even as He is pure."

Ah ! yes ; in this strange world, where there is so much to sadden and distress, how could we fare forth on our changeful journey with hearts of constancy and courage, but for the hope of light and strength supernatural to guide and sustain ? In a world beset with dangers, and full of temptations, well may we fear for ourselves ; and therefore much is our need of well-grounded hope. But for others, how much more ! — for the young, the innocent, the eager ; for those who, with all the joy and enthusiasm of youth, with all its overweening self-confidence, all its impatience of restraint, all its intolerance of reproof, all its blindness to the value of the experience of older guides, are going forth to the battle of life, and treading the rough way of temptation and struggle. For these would not our anxiety — sufficiently severe — become anguish not to be borne were it not for the relief and power of prayer, for a knowledge of the resources of grace, for the well-founded hope which arises from the Passion of the Lord, that light may be theirs in the moment of darkness, and strength in the time of struggle ? Certain as it is that the path of light is humility, so is it certain that the way of strength is mistrust of self and confidence in God. For ourselves, and more still for those —



the loved, the longed-for, those for whose life we would gladly give our own, for whose salvation we almost dare to be willing to be lost—for all, let us take courage as we gaze on that love and sorrow—the witnesses of tremendous moral vigour, the guarantees of needed supplies of strength. “Lord Jesus,” we cry, with anguished longing and yet consoling trust, “Thou Who knowest them to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of their nature they cannot always stand upright, grant them such strength and protection as may support them in all dangers, and carry them through all temptations, for the merits, by the power, of Thy Passion.”

## The Hope of Glory.

*The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.*—ISA. XXXV. 10.

THIS, my brothers, this is, practically at least, a prophecy of the final scene of the Passion. But it is more; and this its further aspect is of far deeper significance to each one of us. It reminds us, by inference, what is the immediate fruit and consequence of the sufferings of our Lord—a fruit that each one of us may gather, a consequence which may be for us all.

I have reminded you on these solemn mornings that our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever else He did for us, bequeathed us a heritage of Hope. Let me venture to assert again that it is scarcely possible that, without Hope, any really noble life can be lived or lasting work be done. I commend this to your patient thought: the nobleness, the self-forgetfulness, the large-heartedness, the lasting usefulness, of the life of any man will be in proportion to his power, in his being of beings, to throw himself forward into the future; and to enable

man to do this there is no power sufficient in this depressing and engrossing world unless the Divine grace of Hope. Well, then, we have need to remember this, that for a Christian, in so far as he really believes in Jesus Christ, there are one or two words or phrases which find no place in the dictionary of life and duty; among them these—"despondency," "failure," "defeat," and "despair." If indeed, if indeed we are striving to follow the Crucified, then "*Nil desperandum*" is the motto for life.

And now, having ventured to say so much as this, I am bound, dear friends, to remind you that Hope is no mere imagination, no echo of a baseless dream; that true Hope, as a religious man conceives it, is a grace, and rests not on our flimsy fancies of what ought to be or might be, but upon the revealed and ascertained promises of God. I am bound, therefore, to warn you, that you must be true to these conditions; that you must not be run away with by your fickle fancies; that you must plant your foot upon these facts and promises if you are to enjoy the blessedness of a stimulating Hope. Recall, then, the results of our discussion.

(1) The great act of the Passion supplies us with the Hope of Forgiveness. This, dear brother man, is all-important. "Though your sins be as scarlet," though you have forgotten the dignity of your manhood and the responsibility of your place in God's creation, I beseech you—there is, indeed, nothing else for you to do

—get to the bleeding feet of Jesus, act on the conditions of His unfailing promise, let Hope send you to His blessed tenderness—send you, sorrowful sinner, to be forgiven.

(2) Then—for the Past is the region of sad memories, but the Future the land of bewildering uncertainties—there is a Hope for the path which lies before you, however dim in encroaching darkness, however rough to your pilgrim feet—Hope of Strength needed in weakness, and Light for the densest gloom; and of this again the sanction, the guarantee—sanction certain, guarantee incontestable—is the Passion of the Lord. So far well. Now, Christian, remember there is one Hope more.

What do we desire when this failing life is drawing to its end? what when those solemn moments, our last on earth, are being counted to their close? There we shall stand, like Dante on the Apennines, like Angelo in his farewell gaze at Florence, with rapid glance, with eye too eager in its terror and pity for the relief of tears—there we shall stand, glancing swiftly and sadly over a fading, a traversed Past. How different that ridge of retrospect from the peak of expectation on which once we stood. Then there were hopes in abundance, though not always heavenly; and *now, now!* Where are the entrancing fancies and unreal fashions which once enslaved our imaginations and enthralled our hearts? where the ambitions which stimu-

lated to effort, fruitless because selfish? where the passionate longings? where the deep and tender affections? where the high hopes for ourselves, for others, doomed—ah me!—to such pitiless failure? where the ideals, with voices sweeter than the sirens, and forms as fair and clear-cut as the Lycian Apollo? where the dear faces once all sunlight? where the good and kindly who have fallen into the ranks of the departing, and passed us, with no message left behind them, in dim procession to the grave? where, too, where all our own miserable inconsistencies, broken resolutions, shattered purposes, unsteadied aims? Ah! in such a moment, what sorrow, even to the forgiven, even to the soul lighted and strengthened on life's journey! Ah! at such a moment what remains? The very last leaf of this world's woods of spring and summer splendour has been swept with unsparing vigour before the winter blast; the very highest hope has at least staggered before the depth of the abyss, and felt the chilling darkness of the grave. What remains, I ask, from all this wreck of human promise, ending in so much human pain? Turn your faces to the pale spectacle of the Crucifix; when all else is over, there remains the "Hope of Glory."

My brothers, this heritage is ours also if we care to claim it.

Yes; it is ours in that last moment of earthly experience, when we stand trembling on the frontier line



between two worlds—ours then in abundant blessing, if only we will claim it now.

## I.

Well, then, let us ask ourselves, not perhaps without enthusiasm, but with all the force and restrainedness of common-sense, what it is we mean by "Glory." Glory! It is one of those great words which represents an only half-defined and yet majestic idea. Certainly its meaning will vary much according to the moral aim of those whose lips translate it. It has its lower and its loftier meanings. It represents an idea, sometimes religious, in the highest sense; sometimes drawn from things innocent and beautiful in Time—still of Time, though not untouched by Eternity; sometimes distinctly stained with the finger of sin. It may be vague, but only with the vagueness of the mountain crags, dim to the eye through the thin mist of approaching winter sunset, but, from very dimness, grand. What is glory? The fair morning speaks its meaning of "glory" in its splendour of cloud-masses and accumulation of colour; the soft evening whispers *her* version of it in the tender pencilling of the slate-grey clouds, not untouched with graduated brilliance, from transparent saffron up to burnished gold. The spring meadows flash their "glory" in the changing enamel of grass

and flowers. Glorious are the masses of the mountains, and the depth of the ravines, glorious the roll of the thunder, the blast of the storm-wind, the angry clamour of the reverberating sea. Nature—strange teacher of a world beyond her, above her—has her moving methods of revealing the thought of glory.

And man! Ah! whatever he touches has too often a stain. Too often with him his “glory” is found, not in actual and indestructible greatness, but in the higher consideration given him from something just less than his essential self in the opinion of his fellow-men.

And God! With Him, ah! ineffable and perfect is that assembly of rays of goodness, greatness, tenderness, of strength and patience, and moral loveliness; that convergence of attributes into one perfect unity of harmony and rest, which alone can be called the highest “Glory.”

• To speak religiously, then, the “Hope of Glory” must include those possible states of the creature which are at least distance from the perfection of God. It must include, at least, beauty, and blessedness, and rest.

## II.

• But stay. Before we examine the meaning of such an assertion, let us ask, How does the Passion of our Master not indeed *compel* us to realise the possible greatness of our destiny, but give us the hope that it

may be realised in the fulness of fact? How does it give us the hope that, instead of being very commonplace people, with sadly low aims, with miserable, unfruitful lives, playing in a pantomime, acting on a stage, we may be *real* men, loving God and doing duty, conquering sin—it may be slowly, but surely—living well in the Present, because having deep in the springs of our will the serious thought of the Future, having a strong purpose and a steady aim, and a sturdy conviction of the truth of the things of this life and another; and when *this* itself needs something more, when the present scene is fading from us, when the autumn leaves of other hopes are blown before the gale, how does it give us the pledge of that which lasts—the Hope of Glory?

1. Now, first, Christianity, if even it has done nothing else, has given mankind a Future. By that fact the conditions of life are changed; from that fact we learn to think of ourselves as deathless spirits born for immortality.

It is a soul-subduing thought, indeed, the possibility of failure, the fierceness of the assaults of the enemy, the weakness with which we yield. But still it remains true that without possibility of failure can be no joy of victory, and that strong grounds for hope of victory are the most powerful stimulants, amid whatever troubles, to a vigorous life. Man is a changed being when he is brought practically in view of a Future.

There hangs in the Dresden Gallery a picture, by a modern artist, not unworthy of careful attention, even though beneath the same roof as the San Sisto Madonna,—a picture of the souls, in Dante's vision, who had crossed the waters, and were waiting to ascend the mountain of purifying sorrow. In the foreground is one striking figure, with a head like an Apollo but the golden hair, the sandy beard, the fair face and open look, the heritage of the Saxon. All about him in shape and sinew is the "spring" of vigorous manhood—and the emphasis of real strength—a very man the painter has painted him, fearless and strong. He is looking upwards, and as he gazes into a dim future, carrying with it the possibility of entire purification, the blue Saxon eyes are filled to brimming with unshed tears, and there is an eager, longing, wistful look towards higher things, which spiritualises and purifies the whole being, till the spectator is drawn, in gazing, into that sympathy which is made of pity, and admiration, and awe.

A parable of this life, dear friends, is in that picture. To be a man indeed, to live in the Present with prevailing power, to be outside the paralysing pressure of despondency, or the corrupting force of merely cynical resolve, to have the weakness and strength of St. Paul, rather than the strength and weakness of Cato, every child of man must be in possession of a Future.

Now think, how wonderful that we are able to form



some notion of the characteristic real features of our God! We can talk of "power," "knowledge," "mercy," "justice," with a calm sense of something of their beauty, but magnify these into the infinite dimensions they reach in the Being of beings; harmonise them, even in faltering, insufficient thought, into the unity of an unbeginning and unending life—then the brain reels, and we begin to feel, like the Prophet, that our place is in dust and ashes.

"In dust and ashes!" Yes; but think, if He, instead of me, takes that place! And this He did at Calvary. Ah! what is the meaning of this soul-subduing story? what the force of this mystery of humiliation? Surely, surely, He could never have bent to that mysterious sorrow, unless He meant to show man the true relative proportions of Time and Eternity, the secret of self-denial, the value of struggle—unless, unless He had intended to imprint on man's mind the dignity of his destiny, to insist on the fact of his Future.

My brothers, among other meanings of the Crucifixion of the Eternal is this: remember the Lord died sooner than betray our Future. Have you not, have you not, then, in His unfathomed sorrow, a "Hope of Glory"?

2. But further, He reminds us and enables us, that that Future, so to speak, may begin here and now. In every Christian "baptized into His death," the life of Heaven *is* begun in potency, *may* be begun in fact.

What! you say with horror. Can you believe that



every wretched creature you see within a radius of a few miles of St. Paul's Cathedral, if only baptized, is worthy of being called a child of God? I answer by a question, and then a statement. The question is this: Do you or do you not believe, my brother, if you should be tried by such a heart-rending and pathetic trial, do you or do you not believe that your lad—because he has not done his duty, because he has been ungrateful for your goodness, and thoughtless of your wishes, because the principles you taught him have been trampled under foot in the madness of his folly and his sin—do you or do you not believe that he has ceased to be your child? Of course, sane man, though sorrowful, you do not. And likewise—here is my statement—in you, O soul, the first moving thought is this—not that you “accepted *Christ*,” but that Christ “accepted *you*.”

Blessed and terrible is that thought. Blessed that you have been brought by the precious Blood under the play of the “powers of the world to come,” that *in* you is regenerating life, that if you fall and yet turn again, it is to your *Father* you are turning; terrible to think you may fling from you the dignity of sonship and the gift of God. But surely, surely, in a world so evil, it is something to remind the miserable, the lonely, the dejected, the forsaken, the degraded woman, the little street lad, the tempted office-clerk, the young man struggling for self-conquest, the young woman exposed

to snares of Evil—something to remind them that “baptized into Christ, they have put on Christ;” that, they may if they will turn back to Him, and abide in Him; they may if they will rise to the height of their calling, and spring boldly forth against the assaults of the enemy, supported and strengthened by “the Hope of Glory.” Yes; Jesus won for us the grace to enter, with new strength within us, into the family of the Future.

3. “To enter!” Nay, more; more than that. The mystery of our Master’s suffering is a fount of power. The Second Adam, the Representative of the race here, has merited abiding strength for His brethren in struggle. From the power of the Passion comes the strength *to persevere*.

To persevere! Ah! how many begin well, and end badly! how many when effort is needed fail! how few succeed! and in spiritual matters how may the law of failure be reversed and thwarted! how may we “persevere to the end”? “

Brethren, certainly our experience, our ability, our far-sightedness, our former good resolves, or even good achievements—these cannot help us. Better men than we have promised much, and belied their early promise. Solomon, Judas, Demas—what a saddening shroud is round their future! Grace is not indefectible; wills are not forced, but free; but still from the side of the Crucified are blood and water—“means of grace;”

from that comes the strength of strong sacraments, and strong absolutions; from that the force of hands and souls outstretched in eager desire and yearning prayer; from that the illuminating spirit, making the Bible a book of guidance and warning, severe, tender, helpful, as none other in the world. Yes; from Jesus Crucified comes the power to persevere in the spirit of His example, self-conquest, humility, penitential sorrow—in the force of His intercession, all-prevailing through His mysterious sacrifice, and in the grace won for those who will to ask and use it,—in these our Master Crucified supplies our need.

O let us rise on the wings of the lofty hope! He has left us to a life of penitence and truth and duty! With power of beginning, of advancing, of persevering to the end, guaranteed by His Passion, shall we not cherish the ambition to be better, the desire to be like Him, the “Hope of Glory”?

Surely so we resolve; and if so, then, brethren, we do well to remember—not to depress us, but to subdue our self-dependence—that, left to ourselves, we must fail.

Brethren, we do well to remember, to gladden our hearts and stimulate our efforts, that clinging to Christ—in prayer, in watching, in the use of Sacraments, and the spirit of penitence, in hatred of evil, in love of goodness, in the courage that does not shrink from toil, and the noble spirit that will not endure final defeat, with the eye fixed and the purpose set—we find in the

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Passion of Jesus—in its self-subdued, its tender love, its mysterious funds of force—the grace we need to help us in our trying temptations and depressing failures—"the Hope of Glory."

### III

Is there more to be said of this Future, of these "powers of the world to come" which are placed at our disposal, and on which we have, as Christians, entered, and in which we may, if we will, as Christians, persevere?

Their result, dear friends, is "glory."

It is true there have been representations of a future life which tend rather to repel than to attract. It is not wonderful that the minds of the uncultured, of the hard-worked and weary, of those to whom this life has little to offer but struggle and weariness and sorrow—it is not wonderful that those whose earthly horizon is bounded by leaden clouds of unrequiting labour should fasten in religious moments on the brilliant visions of the Revelation, and give them an over-literal, and unspiritual, and too trenchant interpretation. And then it is, of course, easy for the cynic to sneer at the enthusiast, easy to shrug the shoulder at a "sea of glass," a "city of gold," and "gates of pearls."

Doubtless the faults of the ignorant and uncultured



are easy to find. But still it remains, there is a meaning; still it is true, that, if you cannot define, the longing spirit can in a measure realise; still there may be a vague sense, but a certain, "that all things are working together for good to them that love God," and that "eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." There is a meaning, there is a fact, represented by the "Hope of Glory."

Else why is religious man, from the noblest to the poorest, thrilled by the thought? The Christian faith has, indeed, two sides: severe condemnation to evil, but also strong sympathy with human sorrow and human aspiration; stern, strong, gentle, tender it is, but never maudlin, never ending in mere sentiment, always seasoned with a manly spirit of reality; it indulges in no melodrama when it talks of "the Hope of Glory."

The idea of God could not, as it has done, haunt humanity if there were no corresponding Person. The idea of a deathless life could not have flashed in ever-brightening and more rapid flashes upon the human soul unless there were the splendid, the awful reality. The idea of Glory cannot have cheered the sick, consoled the dying, supported the sufferer, stimulated the struggling, if it were nothing but a dreamy sentiment with no response in corresponding fact.



IV.

And, indeed, there are two considerations which may at once help us to love and cling to the Passion, and which tend to bring this home.

First, Scripture, in teaching the Hope of Glory, falls in with a yearning which belongs to our better moments, and which is felt to be the property of man, as man. In the efforts of self-conquest which mark a Christian's life, is not one hope which he cherishes *this?*—that at last the tone and temper which raises the commonest things to a high and heavenly level may be the normal temper of the soul; that the vivid joy that once was ours, when years were young and life was all aglow, that this may be ours again,

“ With added brightness, yet the same,

in things of heaven. What is this dream which haunts the chamber of the human heart? A dream there is of happiness, with no besetting fear of disaster; a dream of rest, without the sting of selfish sloth; a dream of labour, with all its bracing power unconditioned by exhausting toil; a dream of achievement, with only the sweetness, and no remaining sadness of severe and trying struggle; a dream of beauty, with no touch of decay; of love, with its light of infinite delighting untouched by one self-seeking thought, and with no freezing foreboding

of change or death; of joy, with the innocence and spring of childhood, and resting on the intellectual strength of the tried and experienced man. Can these, which pervade the best and purest hearts at the highest moments of their best and purest enthusiasms, be only dreams? Are they not rather voices of God within the soul, articulated plainly in the language of His Revelation by the strengthening, stimulating promises of a "new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" by the glorious heritage guaranteed to man by the Cross, and its sequel the Resurrection—the "Hope of Glory"?

And, next, the same is plain, from a closer consideration of man's constituent faculties.

(1) Man is a being of intelligence; he is gifted with powers for knowing, and those powers are rightly—then, and then only rightly—used, in so far as he seeks and knows the Truth. Man's intelligence has been wounded by that perversion of his nature which is evident in a fallen race. He is the victim of error. But error, like sin, is not *a thing* in itself. Truth and goodness, these are eternal facts; error depends for its existence on the activity of a perverted intellect, just as sin does on that of a perverted will. Man, indeed, has within him lights guiding him in the path of truth—conscience, the moral sense, the intuitive perception of a God above and by him; these unfold with teaching, and reflection, and thought, and the varying exercises of life's disciplining experience. Man, therefore, is responsible in large

measure for what he knows or does not know. It is possible for him to set his face towards deeper darkness, or firmly to plant his feet on the track of the dawn. But, at the best, how dark and uncertain the conclusions of intelligence on the secrets of truth! Christ, Who is the Truth, has fought with the legions of error, borne witness to the truth, even to the Cross, that man may know. Ah! restless human intellect, how sad and wandering until thou dost grasp "the Faith once delivered;" and even when believing, still subject to how many difficulties, how many dangers! The hour is coming, coming quickly—so says the Blood of the Passion—when Faith is revealed, when the vision of the soul is purified, when mists are rolled away, when training is completed, when riddles are read and mysteries made clear; when the intellect, weary and toiling, but purified by faith and strengthened by struggle, shall gaze with the intensity of delight on the unfolded universe, shall rest in the vision of the Truth. No more possibility of error! Is not this a "Hope of Glory"?

(2) But, intellectual as he is, man is, beyond this, a moral being. He *may* fall short, he *may* succeed; that is his high and perilous privilege. In his hands has been placed a weapon of quite appalling power, a weapon by which he may, with proper use, hew his way through all opposing forces, or which may be used for self-destruction—he has been intrusted with free-will.

And we cannot blind our eyes at once to its significance and our responsibility. The Christian Faith has placed before the eyes of the most worldly and the most wilfully indifferent a lofty standard, a high, an almost dazzling view, of the dignity and destiny of man. The Divine love and sorrow of the Cross shows him his worth, his danger, what may be his greatness. Man is a moral being. He may well quail before the possibilities of persistently perverted choice; but he sees before him at once guiding example and proffered power. There, that path of self-conquest, humility, determination—*that* is the path for him to walk on; there, that best storehouse of grace—*that* is the supply to draw from. He sees the possibility of *goodness* conquering in himself, becoming not only the bias, but the pervading state of his whole being, as a moral being—that hope of the achievement of goodness, *that* is his “Hope of Glory.”

(3) Man is a social being. “It is not good for man to be alone.” The society in which man lives has drawn out his highest affections and his most degrading passions. This has been, in envy, in malice, in cruelty, in tyranny, in covetousness, in sensuality, the arena for the play of his vilest selfishness; this, too, in philanthropy, in friendship, in the fair adjustment of capital and labour, in interdependence between teacher and taught, and wise advance in arts of government—above all, in the deeper play of purified affection, in the elevating



love of woman, and all the ennobling feelings springing up and living in the thought of home,—this has been the theatre of purest and most exalted self-forgetting. Alas! the brightest sunlight of our social being, this also is traversed by clouds of sin. “An enemy hath done this.” Whence otherwise the misunderstandings which separate good men, the irremovable suspicions between class and class, the disappointed hopes which tend to lead the soul from strength and vigour to the barren fields of cynicism, to despondency, to the land of “sorrow and sighing”?—

“ I once had thought that all the light of morning  
     This heart had found  
 Was but the shimmer of a glow adorning  
     The whole world round.

I once had thought that Death, like minor measures,  
     Enhanced Life's sweeter tune ;  
 That Hopes danced on, like spring's unfolding treasures,  
     From May to June.

I once had thought that all the chill December,  
     Its winds and snow,  
 Fled like the storm-driven clouds ;—All this, remember,  
     Was long ago.”

So wails the soul, for, indeed, man's life as a social being is subject to disappointment. Against this, indeed, he must struggle; this is not life's final word. Man is subject to the unspeakable pangs of parting. God has given man the high power of loving. To love deeply and tenderly, with self conquered or forgotten



in devotion to another soul, is one of the highest prerogatives of our human nature. Here, indeed, is the delirium of delighting; here alas! also the passion of our pain. Those we love, after all, are not yet given, they are but lent to us; and again and again the grave may close over the fair earthly form of some whom to lose would be to lose the sense of sunlight and the spring and energy of life.

Yes, but think; a time is coming, O soul, when disappointments are impossible, and misunderstandings no more; when no moody temper can cloud the sunlight of a real affection—to be repented of possibly all too late; when friendship cannot fail, nor friends forsake, and when those who love can never feel the pang of severance, but shall “meet to part no more.”

Do not let us forget that grace is won for us in the Passion to implant and strengthen, in our weak and wilful natures, the tenderness, the strength, the humility, the patience, the considerateness and self-forgetting which here bind soul to soul; and do not let us neglect to use it. Do not let us forget that Maundy Thursday has its recurring witness of the great ordinance, and the “new commandment;” the sweet Sacrament to represent before the Divine mind the one Sacrifice once offered, “showing the Lord’s death till He come;” to give each the Bread of Life which binds us to Him, incorporating us in His life; to bind us to each other also in a lesson of Christian love. Do not, do not let us be self-excom-

municated. Christian, sinful Christian, examine yourself; repent of your sin; make your confession; go, go, absolved, to offer the "sacrifice of our ransom," and to feed on the Heavenly Food. Do not neglect to do it; and, as you do, rejoice and be glad that "love is stronger than death, and mightier than the grave;" that your best affections will not be disappointed; that you and those you love—the good, the beautiful, for whom you have mourned, with whom you have trodden this life's pilgrimage—shall come, shall come with singing, redeemed of the Lord, crowned with joy, to Zion, and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Depressed, disappointed, broken-hearted, but loving—is not this a "Hope of Glory"?

A "Hope of Glory"! Toil, indeed, toil at the labour; advance, struggle on on the way; forget not the need of the present; keep head clear, heart true, will determined for the claims of duty and work. Be no dreamer; but also be no worldling. Plant the foot firmly on the stones that pierce the bleeding feet; toil on, and fear not; but look up, look up to the breaking of the day—"the Hope of Glory."

## V.

"The Hope of Glory!" How little we know or dream of its meaning! how far beyond all stretch of imagination the state of souls, safe after "much tribu-

lation," in the city of God! And yet how certainly it comes to our ears, with the music of a real, an inner thrill of joy!—like the sound of falling water on the dreamy afternoon, like the sighing of the wind in woods of spring-tide beauty, like the sobbing of the waves on the patient gleaming sands, like songs from a loved voice heard when the night is still—like all images of peace, rest, and solace from trouble—the "Hope of Glory!"

How, further, can we dissect and determine anything so delicate, so real, yet so vanishing?

Surely, surely, all that is possible and wise is to say that it certainly includes those gifts we have named to the human spirit; it certainly therefore offers us the enjoyment of perfect beauty.

(1) For Beauty is nothing less in any being than harmony in the relation of its several parts. It is seen in Nature, it is seen in human form, it is seen above all in the mind and spirit—seen by the soul. The Greeks were attracted, intoxicated, by the matchless symmetry of the human body; *this* the Christian could not be indifferent to, but always felt towards it as the symbol—the sad, pathetic, passing symbol, of a higher loveliness. True beauty in the creature is in the soul—the soul which thinks, and feels, and wills, but is something individual, and deeper than any of its acts; the soul which, in grace in some measure, in glory in completeness, harmonises the faculties of its being, dislocated,

disturbed, alas! by sin. Thus also the soul becomes capable of realising with unbounded and yet undisturbing emotion the "Uncreated Beauty," "the Being of beings,"—the Living God. To gather up all forms of beauty which have ever penetrated our being, to have them purified from every stain, to see all of them reflecting eternal loveliness, leading up to the contemplation of Him Who is the Source and Ideal of all that is really beautiful, and to rejoice in this, with the soul no longer in possibility of sinning, but capable of a vision given only to the pure in heart—this, this is to realise "the Hope of Glory."

(2) "The Hope of Glory!" It includes Blessedness; or,—groping thus to grasp an idea so transcendent,—we may see Blessedness is an aspect of Glory. "The ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion, joy and gladness in their hearts, sorrow and sighing fleeing away." There is the picture. Sorrow and sighing! Young men, some of you may possibly have not yet awakened from the dream of early days to the grim realities of the world you live in. Alas! you are, I suppose, in the throes of the awakening. If so, you begin to realise the desperate poverty of the poorer; the evil passions bred of hopelessness; the envy, the jealousy, the unreasoning hate against the more prosperous: you begin to realise the awful temptations of the miserable and wretched; the hell which earth is turned to for weak women and helpless children by the ungoverned



lusts of wicked men, the cold and cruel heartlessness of the materialistic money-seeker, the dismal darkness of those in whom faith in goodness and God has failed. You begin to realise the awfulness of lost opportunities; the pathetic sadness of souls too late awakened to the wilfulness and folly with which they have misused or flung from them the gift of influence; the dreary disappointment, the poignant anguish involved in the parting of friends, the breaking of hearts, the smothered cries of the lonely, the tears that scald the cheek over the dust of an open grave, of which no burning drop can touch the heart that beats no more. O sorrow-stricken, sin-laden world!

“Too full of death the great world is, the halls full of weepers.”

It will end, it will end; the cries of anguish will die in the whisper of thanksgiving. “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Pause on the thought; you will be tempted—yes, sorely, if you have a heart for love and sorrow—to reel and fall in helpless despondency when life brings home to you the vanishing of dreams.

Think again—

“I once had thought that all the light of morning  
This heart had found  
Was but the shimmer of a glow adorning  
The whole world round.”

So we said just now; but I beg you to remember these were voices of the soul; the “once had thought”



was not a false thought, though its complete fulfilment is in glory. Listen and dream of it, clasp and cling to it, write it in the heart when it is near to breaking, whisper it from the lips, when words of ordinary life are fading to a wail. It comes from the region of the blessed ; it comes to the heavy-laden and downcast, comes like the dreamy cadences of soothing music, comes like the sway and swell of church bells across the snow, comes with an accent of certainty to revive courage and strength in the weary. "Sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Positive blessedness also. "Joy upon their heads." Crowned ; yes, crowned with pure pleasures. Such is the state of those in glory. The loftiest reason, once baffled in this mysterious and disturbing world, now satisfied in the causes and harmonies of things, *satisfied* with God ; the affections of the higher spiritual being finding in essential love a delight beyond all power of change or hurting ; the sense of the beauty of goodness, and at last of its triumph—this, this is Glory.

(3) And I add—Rest.

Certainly one root of sorrow to the soul on earth is toil and struggle.

Little need to dwell on that. Labour, once a curse, has become a blessing ; but the world is full of toil which is fruitless ; full, too, of weariness, springing from fruitless, hopeless toil. What masses of men are working with no hope, no future, only the goad of sad

necessity! others too, for that "which profiteth not," and can give no return. While we are in youth, and health, and vigour, while income is easy, and friends are plenty, it is possible to take sunny views of life; but they will not last. The only sunshine which lasts streams from Eternity. Labour *here*, labour and sorrow; *there* is the Glory of Rest.

## VI.

For man, remember—intelligent, moral, social man—is a being of Eternity. Wrap himself he may in the folds of sense and evil, still he cannot be *satisfied* in Time. Therefore he thrills to the mystery of music, and is touched by the sadness of song. Therefore in the deepest depths of the commonplace he has flashes of a higher life; therefore, though half enslaved by selfishness, he wakens to generosity; however buried in self-seeking, he has better moments, and voices reach him from another world. Why else these "better moments"? why else these clearer visions? why else these touches of divine regret and more divine desire? why, why above all, does he, rough, self-seeking, wayward, rise to the dignity of human love? Man is a creature of Eternity; if he has left his Zion, he may still return to it; he is formed for a better country. Ah! see to it, that you do but cling to the hope of your heritage. Man is born for glory.

For glory ! Yes ; and turning the heart and will in repentance, and stretching the hand of faith for the boundless merits, following the example, clinging to the power, of the Passion it shall be yours. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"The ransomed of the Lord !" They are going forth on a weary pilgrimage. They must be persistent yet gentle, strong yet tender, with high ideal yet practical action, self-respecting yet unselfish, of unswerving loyalty to truth yet large in heart and rich in sympathy, never scornful but rather reverent, with eager and submissive thoughts towards God, with earnest and trustful hearts towards man.

These are they who pass over deadly chasms, and travel over piercing stones. Their feet are cut and bleeding, and their hands are grimed with toil ; often in their ears is the sound of the tempest, round them only twilight, and before them the valley of the shadow ; sometimes lonely, sometimes fainting, often weary, half tempted to fall in the journey ; still, still they have learnt and they remember the teaching of Divine sorrow ; they are daring the ascent of the mountain ; they have their feet on the track of the dawn.

The dawn it is coming ! The first streaks are above them, the clouds are breaking, there is sound of sing-

ing. See ; the shadows are sweeping before the shafts of sunlight : " sorrow and sighing " are fleeing away.

Think, think—if you can think—what it will be when temptation has no more power to seduce, or sin to destroy ; when the conscience has no voice of reproaching, and remorse can no longer devour the mind : *then* desire shall be spotless, and its satisfaction all one with the highest judgments of our better selves.

Think, think—when anxiety no more disturbs, and care no more can gnaw, when the love of the heart is supreme in sovereignty, and no more clouds return after the rain—think of rest which is not slothful, of calm which has all the energy of effort ; think—if ye children of a restless world are capable of such high imagining—think of the " glory " which lies before you, " where the wicked cease from troubling, where the weary are at rest."

It is coming, it is coming ; Lord, help us to approach it with reverent spirits and longing hearts !

O blessed vision ! The victory of goodness, the reward of labour, the conquest of sin, the subdual of self, the slaughter of Death the Destroyer, the triumph of love ! This, this, brave heart, is coming. Look up, look up. Go on and do your duty. Christ Crucified is Christ Conquering ; there is a " Hope of Glory " !



## VII.

“The ransomed of the Lord ‘shall’ come to Zion, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” After all, even the fine and exquisite touches of this ancient prophet are crude and rough compared to the reality, as the Norman arch, or even the pointed window, is at best the blurred and material expression of unspoken instincts or great thoughts. After all, such words as “penitent,” “innocent,” “martyr,” “beauty,” “blessedness,” “rest,” are rough but concentrated statements of traits of human history, departments of human delight or longing, and the struggles of human souls. The vast *results* of human sorrows and human feelings and human efforts are only hinted in the faint facts of a passing life, and dimly indicated in the symbolism of the prophetic seer. They leave behind them vague hints, dim indications of a world of life, too mysterious to be penetrated, too awfully real to be ignored. What we do know, what we can fall back upon, is the remembrance, the fruitful remembrance, that here is unveiled for a moment the hint of a truth; and further, that that truth touches each of us with the power of personal contact, and in its fulness one day it shall be plain. We are only told enough to startle, to arrest, to restrain us from evil, to guide us in conduct. Human life, human history, is a tremendous mystery—sometimes clear in sunshine, sometimes dark



in tragic clouds, but it IS, and its end shall be one day plain. Here we have a revelation, with the beauty of a dream, but with the dignity of a vision—for a dream, though fair, is unreality; a vision, though mysterious, is a fact. In the hope of that vision we may live by grace, striving against evil, struggling after goodness, bearing misfortune, fulfilling duty, relying upon eternal tenderness, resting on boundless pity; and as we pass through the valley of the shadow, even, even when the clouds are thickest, sustaining our fainting hearts by the certainty of the “city that hath foundations,” by the looking for the morning on the mountains, when the real result of man’s trial, of God’s goodness—a new and blessed life—endless, perfect, satisfying, is before us,—when we come, ransomed, “with joy to Zion, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

I have done. We live in an age—let us remember it—when so keen is competition that commercial morality—that is, personal integrity—is strained to snapping; when social intercourse is so easy that the conditions of society are not always most consonant with the claims of simplicity and truth; when political enterprise is so absorbing that loyalty to principle is more than ever needed, and more than ever hard; when intellectual activity in every field of speculation needs to be earnestly chastened because it is exceptionally strong; in an age when old things are passing away, and all things are becoming new; an age intoxi-

cated with progress, and yet still subject to sorrow; above all, an age in which Christianity—that Faith which has supported thousands—has enlightened centuries, has drawn forth the most lavish affections, the deepest enthusiasms, the most heroic self-conquests of the best of our race—the Faith that supported Stephen in his struggle, Paul in his toil and teaching, Francis in his missionary labours, that won St. Augustine from licentiousness to self-conquest, stayed up Savonarola in his reforming enthusiasm, made Louis IX. a Saint upon a throne,—that Faith which illumines the grey twilight of many a laborious life in our workshops with unearthly radiance, and comforts thousands here in London, in penury, in wretchedness, in death, is said to be—sometimes in accents of anguish, sometimes with thoughtless levity, sometimes with unscrupulous cynicism—said to be on its trial, or even—it is half in triumph imagined—tottering to its fall.

How shall we bear ourselves in an age full of blessing, rife with trial? On us, on us, in a measure—on each one of us—must depend the outcome, and the character of the heritage which for others we leave behind.

Well—for them, for ourselves—we do well to remember, that some certainties know no change. For each of us life is still short, is still a probation, is still a prelude to another world. For each of us of not so

much importance are the fleeting conditions of our short span, as the outcome of those conditions, their result in our final fixity of character.

Still, as formerly, a mystery, a witness, a warning—above all (how blessed!) as a Vision of Eternal Hope is displayed, in the fulness of its benediction and the tragedy of its sorrow, the pale and splendid figure of the Crucified!

To us each is offered that vast fund of treasure, of teaching, of strength, of pardon, of tenderness, which are summed up and collected on the Cross. And on *how* we reject, or on *how* we accept it, depends our eternity.

Eternity! Ah, the thrilling sound of it! At that vision the trivial objects of passion and eagerness grow faint and pale. Eternity! at the thought of its splendour to the lonely and weary one, who will clasp the bleeding hand, and follow the leader in sorrow and triumph, the heart dilates with rapture. Shall not the voices of longing rise with prayer and praise?

O Crucified Jesus, O Friend of sinners, O Lord of Life, O Conqueror of the Grave—we praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, and we pray Thee, when we have reached the end of our mortal conflict, by Thy grace, by Thy mercy, by Thy merits, may we be with Thee and be Thine.

## The Decision on the Needs of the Soul.

*‘I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.’—1 COR. II. 2.*

WE are compelled, dear friends, we are compelled by the teaching of the Church, to meditate this week upon the Passion; we have, I submit, no choice of subject; we *must* stand under the Cross of Christ.

And you will feel with me—will you not?—that it is not always easy to rise out of common life, to pass from among the struggles of every day, to an exalted height of spiritual contemplation; and therefore, as with great delight and great desire I am permitted yet once again, as now for many years, to speak to you of our Master’s sorrows, I can scarcely be wrong if I invite you, here and now, to remember those antecedent thoughts which help at least to lift our minds to the platform of the Passion, and impress upon us the need of the teachings of Christ Crucified.

Of all the multitudinous subjects which invite the attention of man, there are two, without contradiction, of imperious interest, though strange to say, in our



mortal struggle, the mass of mankind shun the pressure of this truth.

First, then, is the soul—that mysterious, central, single principle which makes each man *himself*, and not another. It is this which is in possession of large and mysterious powers. By *thought* the soul dives into the depths of things, and soars to their most exalted summits; *it* is the interior language of the soul, and, clothed and incorporated in word, it expresses the soul in a world outside the single life. But the soul is more than thought. By *will* man determines his own acts, and therefore his own destiny; no outward forces can finally *compel*; the soul by will reigns free within its central citadel. Certainly outward influences or forcible motives from within may tell upon it, but in the last resort, the decision is with a Will which possesses a sovereign freedom of its own. By *desire* the soul stimulates the will to action; when lofty and purified, this is the raw material of that love, the soul's loveliest adornment, whereby it is capable of the greatness of sacrifice. But the soul is something beyond Desire, or Will, or Thought—the central self that wields or submits to them all. Yes,—man is conscious of himself; *he* is a force, a fire, a power enforcing the efforts of thought, the longings of affection the decisions of will. Man is a single self, a living



soul. Surely, surely, there can be few subjects so full of overwhelming interest 'as the bare fact of the separate individuality of the soul. This strikes us always and everywhere. Like the solemn moan of the ocean underneath the roll of waves, or tossing of the spray, or flashing of the sunlight on the surface of the sea ; so below the surface of a noisy, crowded, tumultuous life is each single, responsible, indivisible, eternal, lonely being—the individual soul. Each has its own cares and troubles, its own shadows and gleams of fancy and feeling, its own regrets and sadnesses, its own aspirations, its own strong loves and incommunicable sorrows, its own solemn gift of *itself*—God-given—to be used for highest purpose, or to sink into degradation and doom.

And then this soul is endowed with a sense of Eternity. It has a haunting sense of another life. Mysterious presences pass before it—sin, repentance, self-distrust,—making, for it, life's source and sovereign, some One above, beyond *itself*. It may, indeed, shrink from the consequences, shrink from the full meaning and call, and claim of Religion—many a soul does ; but it cannot choose but acknowledge the power of the facts of moral truth which, if followed to their ultimate ending, point upward to that eternal world. The soul—yes, in its waking moments it has this sense of Eternity. Sometimes, indeed, it is not only vague but *thin*, with no power or force to *move* the soul ; sometimes it is put

aside on grounds of reasoned argument ; but every here and there it will spring up again in a moment, like an unwelcome visitor, who *will* look in. Sometimes also, it will possess and illumine the soul, undimmed by whole armies of well-arrayed arguments in the brain. For the soul has capacities, strong, mysterious, more fundamental than trained and regulated thoughts. It has the capacity of piercing through the armour of powerful argument, which yet it cannot slay in open fight ; it can turn the flank of a *conclusion*, and grip a *conviction* with a grasp firmer than death, stronger than the grave.

Further, it is capable—I have said it—of Love. There is a fund of *that* somewhere in every soul, if ever it can be reached. It is alone, awfully, mysteriously alone ; yet it can go forth, it does go forth, emptying itself into other lives, losing itself in these. It can love. And it feels instinctively that love demands a person, and that love has in its texture a fibre of Eternity. Love, from its nature, places no barriers, admits no limits, recognises no frontier. For it Time has no meaning—its very being demands, as a necessary condition, Eternity.

And further : it is capable of, nay, by necessity is bound to, *progress*.

• Sometimes vividly conscious of an advance of some sort, sometimes only half awake to it, but startled now and again—like a thought-absorbed wanderer on the

sea-beach, by his closeness to the cliffs, or his dangerous nearness to the sobbing sea,—for better, for worse, it is moving on. It has set out on a mysterious pilgrimage ; it is passing across the rugged mountain ridges of life, passing—how pathetic the thought !—how subduing !—passing once, and no more. Behind it regions of mystery ; before it a sufficiency of gloom. Sometimes the path is in darkness, sometimes lighted up by a flash of fire ; sometimes, like Dante's pilgrims in the Purgatorio, freshened with the stimulating breezes of a better hope ; sometimes, like Salvator's figures, thrown out from gloomy backgrounds, treading the verge of precipices of despair ; but always, more or less—your experience will bear me out—saddened by uncertainties, and beset with questions which rise to dimensions of overwhelming difficulty.

For, again, the soul is face to face with perplexities. Questions which run up into infinite consequences demand, require, some practical answer, for the proper conduct of the common affairs of Time. The soul is living in two worlds : one placid, commonplace, tangible, concerned with matters apparently of meagre value ; another intimate, interior, very serious, with its business to be transacted hour by hour, in choices and acceptances and refusals to be made with peremptoriness side by side with—nay, even mixed inextricably among—the common dealings of that outer world. Yes ; pause. In the blaze of the drawing-room, in the noise

of the busy street, by the flickering light of the fireside at home, on the raging sea, in the quiet evening walks, in the work of the workshop, in the silence of the wakeful night—the soul of each of us, amid whatever *outward* demands, is transacting the persistent, the pressing, the all-important business of its inner life. For the life, the true life, of the soul depends not upon the subject-matter before it, so much as on its manner of handling it; not so much on the “*what*” as on the “*how*.” If Angelico touches the St. John Baptist or the Virgin Mother, the one is the severe and holy ascetic, the other the pure, supernatural Saint; under Raphael’s brush, the St. John in the Tribune at Florence is the wild, earnest boy of the desert, and the San Sisto Madonna at Dresden is the Mother of God; while Leonardo throws a glamour of heathenism over one and the other, so that, with all his power, his Madonna is often a type of heathen womanhood; and the Baptist of the Louvre or the Palazzo Rosso in Genoa is a pagan deity more than a forerunner of the Messiah and a Christian Saint. So each soul-artist in like manner is working on common subjects of daily life, and produces pictures how strangely different!

Further, midway, in its upward or downward course, the soul is confronted once and again with a mysterious Presence; an awful shadow is thrown across its path. It is alone, indeed; yet not alone. There is an eye upon it, piercing, persistent. It feels that no barrier is stout



enough to keep back *this* visitant, no shroud thick enough to stay the shaft of *this* glance. Under the lightning glance of *this* eye, though hidden from all others, its inmost act is "naked and open." It is conscious of God. The Being of Beings is about. It alternates in states of fear and hope, of joyful aspiration and deep despondency, beneath the penetrating power of *that* Life. And too well it knows that from Him a voice must speak, if any certain answer is to come to its perplexing problems. For these are too intimate, too intricate, too swift for statement, too changeful, too involved, too closely personal for any other mind to take them in, or any voice to speak the answer, except it be *that* voice, *that* mind.

It knows that from this fact every scientific proof that he *can* answer, that he *will* answer, is beyond the reach of possibility; it walks alone, walks by its inner light, "by faith and not by sight;" proof, rough ordinary *proof*, there cannot be. A sense creeps over it—whence comes it? why is it?—a sense that

"Thou wilt not leave us in the dust,  
Thou madest man, he knows not why.  
He thinks he was not made to die,  
And Thou hast made him, Thou art just"—

a sense that God does, God will, place Himself—nay, that God has placed Himself—if only we will look and see—at the disposal of the soul. How? When? Where? If so, the condition must be unique,



mysterious. Has the Highest placed Himself in such conditions?—such that His voice can be heard, such that His judgment can be ascertained on these perplexing problems found everywhere, and so personally practical, in this mortal life?

Now here the Christian Faith comes in. Stay, wandering soul; look up and listen. He has. Hear the apostolic statement straight and plain. He Whom thou listenest for has given answers to thy questions, given them in His Own Person, and under conditions startling yet necessary.

“I have determined,” writes the Apostle, who had read the secret—“I have determined,” he cries, “announcing a well-weighed conclusion, rising to the crest of conviction, to the summit of an unfaltering certainty —“I have determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, *and Him crucified.*”

Here is a practical aspect of that splendid life, of that appalling death; here are found answers to many difficulties. Let us listen, let us listen this week, to the “Decisions of the Passion.”

## II.

Stay. That it should be so is antecedently not improbable, for two reasons:

First, we have in evidence a pathetic fact:—

(1) The unspoken, ever-recurring yearnings of poor humanity for higher things is enough to fill the heart with tears.

Man sins and suffers, suffers and sins; but, until indeed the heart is fatally hardened by long and persistent submission to evil, man is no way satisfied. In evil finally obeyed there is no satisfaction, but the deadliness of death; but in poor humanity there are high visions and low achievements: "the will present," the "how to do" not found. Then there come moments of clearer revelation. How often in life's journey we reach a sudden turn in the road: before us unexpected reaches of trouble and sorrow; but behind us perplexing surprises, the retrospect of life, so different from the actual pressing facts; *then* was a self-deceiving glamour, *now* a full clear view of reality, and then the anguish of regret measuring the force of aspiration! Ah! these high and blessed moments of penitence and longing, seeing what we are, and having a vision what we might be,—are they not the proof of the dignity of our being, and of the danger and difficulty besetting us unless we have a clear standard and a determining rule?

How great the number who can tell who go on doggedly in life, meeting the facts of every day with stern determination and an almost stoical despair, because in their heart of hearts what they think, and choose, and do is so far beneath the longing of the

soul ; because they are tempted by the lying voice to think, "It must be so," "It cannot be helped," and to sink, with that longing still unsatisfied, into the life of quiet self-seeking or degrading self-indulgence, when they might have been true and stalwart, "quitting them like men and being strong" ?

Yes, yes ; believe it : better the "high failure" than "low successes ;" best a man's reach exceeding his grasp, "or what's a heaven for ?" better the lofty aim, the earnest effort, though often at best only half succeeding ; best anything of high unsatisfied longing than mere weariness, *tedium vitæ*, ennui—call it what you may—the portion of those who not only cannot all succeed, but scarcely care to try.

Ah ! well, this is a world of unsatisfied longings—a most pathetic fact—and we men need a *man's* voice, strong in the strength of suffering and self-sacrifice, to tell us clearly and decisively the path of duty, lest we waste strength in aimless yearning when we are forced to act.

(2) And if the yearnings of man are a pathetic fact, God, entering the rank of humanity in the depth of sorrow, this, this is a subduing vision.

These things are calculated to touch all men whose hearts, though not upon their sleeves, are beating in their breasts.

We are touched by *strength*. Perhaps it is our sense of need ; perhaps it is instinctive joy at anything that

bears even the faintest likeness to the power of God—anyhow, there it is.

We are moved and startled when *strength is joined with sorrow*, when the sorrow is deep, piercing, tremendous, yet restrained, almost a match for the strength that sustains it, and yet controls. For, indeed, real lonely sorrow, with nothing hollow, nothing touching on the *luxury* of woe, nothing blinding to duty, nothing paralysing for work, nothing stimulating to selfishness in it, is the property of strong souls. And when strength finds one exercise, and sorrow stimulates to one rugged path of conduct, when both unite in self-sacrifice—this reaches the heart of humanity.

For, indeed, self-sacrifice implies the deepest, truest, most sympathetic sorrow for others, and the highest exercise of moral strength. Such was the Cross. And we—poor pilgrims on the rough, chill uplands of life, and deep in the depth of the “Valley of the Shadow”—we with perplexing doubts, and commonplace cares, and intimate unspoken sorrows—seeing *that* spectacle, knowing our own longings, may listen for Decisions to brace and console us, and surely shall not listen in vain.

### III.

So felt St. Paul. There is something terrible to us common men in that high nobility of surrender and



devotion which marks St. Paul's character in his relation to Christ. True, in him it was exceptionally grand. He had a noble work assigned to him in advancing the kingdom of Christ; but it required great nobleness, great grace, to fulfil it. In a true sense, in Christianity, as in other matters, things are to us what we bring to them; filled with splendour *in fact* they may be, yet empty to *us* for want of responsive sympathy and an answering heart. And so we see it in the full reach of its sway in one of such intensity of earnestness, and devoid of one grain of base motive or vulgar ambition. But the truth of St. Paul's response to the teachings of the Cross shows indeed his saintliness and greatness, but shows also that those teachings, if men will have them, may be had.

Again, remember, some men, even in ordinary life, are only half alive unless their own acts bear fruit in others;

“ Their wholeness is not rounded,  
Save in the plastic souls of other men ; ”

they find no truth truly absorbing unless they find its *effect* in the world around them—once find that other souls re-echo back their thoughts, then, and then only, their thoughts to them themselves are living things. That has its analogue in the Christian's faith; above all, in a soul like that of St. Paul. Only in these it is the life and thought and action of another—not the reaction from another of their own thoughts on them—



that gives life to themselves. They know all *in Christ*. But though St. Paul is, I repeat, a *high* example, yet he is an example for all who try, at however saddening an interval, to read all things *in Christ*.

In Christ! And, however known He be to those who know Him most, what a world of mystery lies still unreached! The expert diver finds the coral or the pearl; but he of all men knows what boundless treasures he has never reached, stored safe among the secrets of the sea. The wise astronomer measures the movements, and divines or calculates the immeasurable distances of the sparkling stars; yet he of all men knows the best what millions of unnumbered worlds the strongest telescope has never touched. "The secrets of Nature," says Pascal, "are concealed; although she is ever acting, her effects are not always unveiled; Time, from age to age, reveals them, and although always of perfect balance in beauty, she is not always in balanced measure known."

So Christ—known more and more to those who seek to know Him—is in Himself a fund of infinite possibility of knowledge; and no department of His revelation is more rich in results to the inquirer, more unfathomable also in its wealth of teaching, than the Mystery of His Passion. On this mystery, on this, the Apostle determined to fix the Christian's gaze: "I have determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Further. One marvel of this mystery is this. It above all gives us at least some glimpses into two most important, two most immeasurable truths. Again I quote Pascal. "Evil," he says, in some such words as these "is easy; of it there is infinity; Good is harmonious; it is one; but there is Evil of a kind as hard to detect as that which is called 'Good;' often, therefore, for this reason, Evil of this sort passes off for Good. An extraordinary grandeur of soul is needed to penetrate this, just as it is needed to reach the Good." Christ Crucified supplies a key to unlock mysteries of immeasurable Evil as well as to open the treasure-house of unbounded Goodness. Hence the value of verdicts on Good and Evil delivered from the Cross. For as it is natural for the mind to believe, as it is also natural for the will to love, so these will fasten on false objects of belief and loving, if they are not provided with the true; let once the truest and the loveliest be provided, then belief will minister to loving, and love will stimulate belief. Now the fairest object for love, therefore the teacher that entirely inspires confidence, will be He Who is "chiefest among ten thousand" in His self-sacrificing sorrow—the Crucified Christ.

My brothers, when we see God entering upon the conditions of our mortal struggle, strung to the highest effort by love to ourselves, we, witnessing that most mysterious transaction—God undertaking sacrifice for

sin—do not, indeed, know the full reach of the mysterious necessity that demanded so awful an offering, yet know enough to learn certain conclusions, to listen to infallible judgments on points of perplexity, whose solution is to us of infinite value, enough to learn much of the infinite hideousness of evil, much also of the majesty and loveliness of all that is good.

Ah! here indeed we touch the reason why the truth of things comes out with such symmetry of proportion and such impressiveness of power in our Master's Passion. It is not merely, I repeat, that decisions are given, but that they are given under conditions which incline us to receive them. Christ Crucified has supplied a force of attraction to the human heart, which is wanting in a Christ of Glory.

In a true sense here, then, we are obeying the severe command: "Judge nothing before the time, until the day of the Lord come."

The day of the Lord *has* come. In many ways, to all of us, it *has* come again and again. In silent whisper of conscience, by open graves, in sudden turns of circumstance, in startling self-revelation, from stray voices of men, from strangely-illuminated verses of Scripture. These "days of the Lord" have entered into our responsibility; in these we have heard the voice of the discerning Spirit; but their teachings have been *personal applications* of broad, grave judgments announced on a "day of the Lord" that is passed—

mysterious, sorrowful—to be ratified in a “day of the Lord” yet future, terrible, and solemn. *The* “day of the Lord,” when He shall disclose the destiny of the creature, lies before us, when Time ends in the last assize; but that will only ratify the judgments spoken for guidance in the solemn “day of the Lord” on Calvary.

#### IV.

Again, think how some one stray truth may *harmonise* the apparent contradictions of this mysterious life, which never can be explained this side the grave.

I explain. Turn to Nature. Sometimes the broad bright wash of sunlight in a summer evening harmonises in a way not easily defined the details of a scene not otherwise, and one by one, to be admired. It dreams, the tender light, upon the hillside; it glows in burnished gold or shimmer of silver upon the varying textures of the leaves; it dances diamond-like upon the flowing waters; it rests in the valleys, sleeps in the hollows of the uplands, smiles in half-waking consciousness from out the drowsy flowers. Somehow—whether rugged rock, or rushing stream, or rounded chalk-down, or flower-decked hedgerow—all, under the magic of the evening glory, combine in one subduing sentiment, and form in harmony one image of repose.

Or again, in autumn, when the days are darkening, there comes a “broad and even-blowing wind,” and bends



the corn-tops, sweeps with pathetic wail across the marshes, rustles mysteriously 'among' the reeds, sighs sadly through the mellowing golden leaves; *each* object stands alone, itself, and nothing more; but with that varying influence of the wind, the whole is harpionised to one suggestion; and, as in summer comes the sentiment of peace, in autumn comes the sentiment of sorrow.

Thus a *motif* in music, thus a *tone* in painting, throws apparently opposing details each into its place, to form with each a whole of harmony.

So the Passion of the Lord.

The human mind stands dazed before the Mystery of Life.

We waken up to the thought of God. The very thought implies unutterable goodness, beauty incomparable, knowledge unmeasured, power without control. All this is ratified by the depth and mystery, the richness and variety, of the natural world, the immensity of scale in all that is, the perfection of finish in the tiniest detail, and everything gifted with capacity to be a source of helpfulness and beauty.

And then another side, side dark and terrible, full of destruction, gloomy with death: the black shadow of evil, with all its attendant ministry of suffering, anguish, hopelessness, defiance, sin; man's lot darkened with storm; the brutes that perish in sad, strange sympathy with man; the whole creation travailing together.



And yet the moving pathos of human life; its tender side, alas! so often blasted. Man's splendid capacity of brain and heart, capacity to know, and, higher still, to love, to bear, to suffer, to forget himself, and lose himself in passionate surrender to the love, the need of others; his power to think of God, his strange and fitful yearning towards the highest, his ambition for a better life, his choice of what is worse, his earnest longing, wild remorse, the nobleness of his aspiration, the greater nobleness of his repentance, his haunting hopes, deceiving dreams, passionate affections, desolating despair, his career of dreadful contradictions, so capable of loftiest aim and lowest degradation, so full of wild invigorating life, so ready at a moment for the chill full stop that checks the chapter, in the pause and silence of the grave.

And then the inexorable cruelty of law,—that chain of cause and consequence which no entreaty seems to break, no fiercest fire of love to soften—"As a man sows so he reaps," seeming written into man's life and Nature's workings in characters of vivid fire. Then the obstinate, almost angry question, "Why, amidst all this beauty, why this bitter misery of evil in the world of a good God? why, foreseeing evil, did God permit free-will at all?" and so on, the questions, angrily, or fearfully, or scoffingly asked again and again by man in his agony,—are these asked in vain? Not quite.

Answers enough of a sort—Pantheistic answers, revolting, foolish, mixing up good and evil, light and darkness—flung back by common sense; Manichean answers of two Gods—good and evil—flung back by conscience; answers of scepticism under various fashionable names—Pantheism, Agnosticism, and what not—amounting to the senseless rebuff, “There is no answer; for in fact, you—man—had better cease your hope and fear; be useful, sensible, take things as you find them; you and all yours are bounded by the grave.”

Man will never listen long to this insulting answer. He knows himself a creature of Eternity.

Then there is the spectacle of Calvary, making clear what can be cleared, showing where as yet it cannot be, harmonising much that was difficult, by the Decisions of the Passion.

Broadly and generally then, this is decided by the Cross. Details, some details, dear friends, we will look at another day.

Consider then.

No answer so grave and trenchant to any question as an answer *acted out*. No acting out so real and earnest as one which is carried on to the utmost limit, the limit of a painful death.

Grave, trenchant, thorough, then, without any of that hollowness and want of conviction that mars so much in human teaching, is the answer of the Cross.

Its spirit and temper is self-devotion, and it implies three things.

(1) That in this mystery of life, where sunlight is so dashed with darkness, some things we need to know, and ought to know, and may know.

(2) Some things we cannot yet fully understand or use to fruitful purpose, and therefore must wait to know till the training is completed for another life.

(3) That, having such assurance of His eager love for us, and submission to our sad condition, we may *trust* God absolutely that, however appearances may perplex us, they are but appearances—the “Judge of all the earth does *right*,” and “all is well.”

## V.

Ah ! brethren, as we gaze with the eye of faith on Christ Crucified, do we not see that this matter of life, in which we are, is an earnest business? do we not witness an example, showing that there is, there must be, toil in spiritual life, severe self-discipline, and watchful self-control? do we not gather in more deeply in our souls the danger of selfishness, the dignity of self-denial? More, we are certain of God's large allowances for frailty and weakness, for sorrow and difficulty, for souls in mixed conditions—allowance never maudlin or of shallow sentiment, or lowering moral strength; we are certain of a breast to lay our

aching heads upon, a heart to beat to our hearts' throbbing; of sympathy in the Best and Highest with human misery and human sorrow. The horizon is dark, we cannot penetrate the shadow; but we cry as we gaze on that decisive proof that God is with us—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." "Fear none," He answers to His people, "for I the Dying, Living, am with you."

In one word, what says the Passion?

"You cannot know it all, my child: the mystery of this strange life, why evil is permitted, why sorrow has come. You cannot understand it all, and as yet it seems not good for you to know. You can understand that sin is hateful, and may be conquered; abhor it, fight it to the end; and listen, look—I cannot tell you *all*, for that were bad for you; but this I can do, this, too, I have done—I have taken My place with you, tasted the whole of it, dashed straight against your sin, and let it hurt Me; plunged into your sorrow, borne your griefs, been happy in your human love, been wrung with your anguish. O My child, My beloved, is not My Cross decisive that you may trust Me, obey Me, follow Me to the end?"

"Lord, we will follow, fearing death's disaster,  
Trembling at storms on life's unresting sea;  
O teach us, guide us, loved and trusted Master;  
Through life, through death, we still will follow Thee."



“Follow!” Yes; whom else can we follow? Ah! my brothers, let us remember how much we need to fix our eyes upon this aspect of the Passion. Amid the vast perplexities, the bewildering problems, the straining situations to which we all are subject, let us remember that we have here a book of reference to guide us, a code of laws to rule, comprehensive decisions and decisive judgments.

The conditions of human life in the main do not alter. We may be more reasonable in politics, keener in scientific discovery, more earnest about education, less unreal in social behaviour than our fathers before us; but we have not rolled back the curse of the Fall; we have discovered no secret for finally subduing human passion, or cutting off its degrading consequences; for abolishing poverty, spreading contentment, insuring to all a measure of happiness; we have invented no panacea against evil; unearthed no secret for abolishing sickness, constructed no scheme for dethroning Death and closing the gates of the grave.

My brother man, Civilisation, with its many gifts, is of God's mercy, and for it let us all be thankful. We, the children of an abundant Present, need look with no sentimental longing back on the days that are gone; but do not let us exaggerate our achievements in a spirit of self-approving pride. Lives still are sinful; hearts still are breaking; still the mourner's tears are flowing; still terrible questions stand before sin-laden



man. We need, we need the love of Jesus. We need the Decisions of the Cross. If it be true that Christ Crucified, and He alone, explains some vexing problem, let us earnestly and faithfully, as Christians before us, clasp the bleeding feet.

I could not indeed invite you to lay such stress upon the fact of our Master's sorrow, if you had the great misfortune to have fallen into the Unitarian impiety—looking to Jesus *only as man*. You might possibly admire His courage, and sympathise with His sorrow, possibly find ground for less exalted feeling, and in pity pass Him by; but you will never gauge and meditate and learn and value the judgments spoken from the Cross, unless you see in the depths of human sorrow the presence of the Living God.

It is this, and this only, that changes what would otherwise be an extravagance of imagination into an act of serious wisdom. The death of a wise man may teach you some lessons certainly, but not essential ones; you cannot, without gravest loss, omit to learn the lessons supplied by the death of Him Who was also God.

This at least, here and now, dear young men, the Cross helps us to remember. Life is a serious matter; we cannot, we dare not, afford to be indifferent to the suffering and sorrow around us, or the sin that is in ourselves. Plenty of brightness in this strange world of chequered light and shadow; but the shadows are so



## The Decision on the Value of the Soul.

*'For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'—ST. MARK VIII. 36.*

I HAVE tried to persuade you, my brothers, to stand with me on the platform of the Passion, and thus to rise above the ordinary level of our common life. I have tried to persuade you to pause and listen to the decisive judgments of the Crucified Christ. We have seen (have we not?), we have seen that, just as a traveller in the mountain valleys of Switzerland, enwrapped by the rising gale, hears the rush and the crash of the waters, feels the power of the increasing storm, is frightened by the darkness, and longs for the light; so the soul—every soul among us—having to pass through a pilgrimage of perplexing trial, is asking, if it be only one flash of light from the face of the Crucified, to see the path it should tread. We have remembered already that to that desire of our souls the Cross is a tribunal of decision, that the Cross is the chair of truth, that the Cross is the final solution of certain cases of

conscience which had hitherto perplexed mankind. We have felt that our business is to stand with listening ear, with earnest desire, and with honest heart, to learn, as to the critical situations of our souls, to learn the judgments of the Passion.

O my brothers, would that we might remember that those judgments are decisive, and that if we will listen for them they shall be ours! Come; we have not forgotten that each decision is impressive because the soul is lonely, because Christ is God, because God as teacher appears in the form of a human character; and then, then, because our Most Blessed Master gives His decisive judgments, not in the robes of splendour, but in the saddening robes of the grave.

What then? "Can I," you ask, "can I—with my eyes upon the Crucifix—can I get a decisive judgment upon the first great question that fronts me in life?" My answer is, and my business here and now, is to support that answer,—my answer is, You can. Now, first, every one of us, by the conditions of his undying nature, and amid the manifold situations of life, is brought face to face with his own soul. No one who thinks for a moment can question that fact. Sometimes it is in sharp outline, like the Sierras of Spain, against the crimson of the dying sky; sometimes it is in dim and restless vagueness of sketch, like the shadows that flit before the traveller in an ocean-haunted cave; sometimes fitfully, like that mysterious figure in a striking

romance haunting the heroine—on the Capitol, in the Catacombs, in the gloom and brightness of the lighted church ; sometimes, sometimes, with persistent finger, pointing to lines which have been written in flame ; sometimes, Cassandra-like, uttering words of woe ; sometimes like the old man of Colonus, coming with blind eyes and outstretched hands, proud yet dependent, high-born yet praying pity ; sometimes by your bedsides, sometimes in the streets, sometimes in the struggle of temptation ; sometimes in the critical moment for deciding solemn, anxious questions ; sometimes here, sometimes there, but ultimately and always confronting us. Yes ; you and I cannot escape *that* destiny ; we are brought face to face with our own soul.

Now, my brothers, sooner or later we have to answer a serious question—the question of the text. And the answer, the judgment—the decisive answer, the decisive judgment—I find on the Cross.

Let us face that question.

Let each one of us ask, What is the decisive award of the Crucified on the relative value of myself and my coveted possessions, when I stand face to face with the thought of my soul ?



## I.

Now before us in this mortal life there are abundant objects of desire. So rich is the store of possible possessions, so various are human ambitions and tastes, so keen too is the edge of appetite, that one chief impulse of the soul is to fling itself forth in a feverish effort to satisfy its lower longings, to gain its "world," if it may be, its "whole world." Well, Scripture ever treats "the world" and the spirit of worldliness as the most subtle enemy of the soul. This is a fact, remember, of the deepest significance to us all.

Possible, quite possible, that the too common ambition to "gain the whole world" is supposed to be limited to those who live a life on a large platform of worldly opportunity for grasping the highest prizes of the world. Nothing is further from the truth. For "the whole world" to each soul may vary infinitely in its actual subject-matter, but in its spirit and danger it is ever the same. The worldly spirit is that which practically treats life, its performances, and its prizes, as bounded by the frontier of time. It is that which treats all things with a limited prudence, whose watchful eye never thinks of piercing beyond the gloom of the grave.

It is *au fait* with business, it is at home in "society," it understands the value of a remunerative moderation, it hates enthusiasm; it has an icy silence or a wise

rebuke for generous ventures ; it allows a standard of conduct, but a low one ; motives it cares little for, immediate results are to it invaluable. It is a spirit of almost infinite adaptability, applying with instinctive capacity any instrument that comes to its hand to further its own ends. It has an alchemy of its own, by which it dissolves and changes, recombines, and then wholly paralyses the power of highest things. It may be detected by its treatment of certain infinite ideas. The thought of God it practically ignores, or treats as subject for decorative statement or rhetorical flourish, or attenuates to the flimsy consistency of a dream ; the thought of Duty, in its real and severe demand, it secretly ridicules, and utterly hates, while it tolerates for its own purposes the useful dignity of the name ; the thought of Sin it refuses to dwell upon, or dresses in gaudy garments, or trims into decorous proportion. Expediency is its petted darling, Principle its detested enemy. It is, however, simple in purpose and energetic in persistence. It loves the Present, and all it can give, and only restrains itself from full enjoyment of it—like an epicure placing a bridle on appetite—that it may enjoy it the more. It breathes freely only in the atmosphere heated by furnace-blasts of energetic evil impulses ; the free winds of Eternity chill it to death.

And so it seeks immediate successes, and tests its achievements by results. Thus it vaunts itself as

eminently practical, and *poses* as the apostle of common sense.

And here it is that the Divine Wisdom takes up its challenge, and tries it by its own standard.

Granted that it *has* succeeded ; granted, in whatever subject-matter, that the goal is gained ; granted that continents are conquered and peoples subdued by astute diplomacy or torrents of blood ; granted that pleasure is produced by sacrifice of principle, or wealth by deftness of dishonesty, or position by cunning, or a name by misused ability, or ease by selfish effort, or power by pandering to popular sin, or a "whole world," in fact, by the handiest means. A Voice from Eternity demands to test it all by its favourite measure—the *practical result* of it all, the common-sense view of the situation, and insists on an answer to the question, "What doth it *profit*?"

For, pause and think. The spirit of Christ, after all, is the really practical spirit. It remembers that self-sacrifice is in the truest, the highest sense, self-saving, according to our Master's saying, "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake, the same shall save it."

Now, in view of such a power and such a spirit, what do we know to be true of the soul?

## II.

There is then, we are well aware of it, in each of us, a central self. And so vast its power of abstraction and analysis, that it can be conscious of itself, appraise its own power, take an inventory of its possessions, just as if it were judging another.

Thus it is subject, and knows that it is subject, to changing moods. There are days in winter when the wind rises to the dignity of a tempest, but without its strength to sustain its unflagging fury. Now it is in the full majesty of resistless storm, now sinks low in the thickets, and pleads for pity, and moans like an exhausted athlete. The sky is dark and terrible at one moment, and the patient earth is lashed with the sweeping scourges of the rain, the leafless branches bend and tremble, and even the ivy, in its fearless immutability of green, seems to cling closer to the lower trunks, and to rustle in a restless trouble of pain; even the faded leaves in the hedgerows, the stalks of the grasses, brown and death-stricken, bend and mutter in a sympathy of sorrow. Another hour, and the sky is clear; the clouds have swept into the distance, or stand, pile on pile, guarding the horizon in crenellated splendour, grand and gentle, like bastions of aërial Alps; the woods are still, like an exhausted sufferer after a night of pain; the grasses glisten—each little blade like a shaft of diamonds; the sun is clear and



brilliant, and the winds are low. Nature is in her moody state of storm and sunshine, not inapt image of a human soul.

And yet the soul, though subject to such change of ecstasy and sorrow, is conscious, is certain, that it is indivisibly one. It shudders by the headstone in the graveyard, remembering how the bodies of its best and dearest are subject to the pitiless dissection of inevitable decay; but it is not only sure, but intimately conscious that, though the same sad fate awaits its own mortal tabernacle, it itself can never be divided, must remain for ever one.

Again, think of the mystery and reality of thought. Thoughts come and go, swift as the lightning, slender as the figures in a dream: sometimes like welcome friends after a dangerous journey; sometimes like the longed-for child, born in the throes of sorrow; sometimes like the detested intruder, unlooked for and unwelcome; but there they are,—substantial representations of the ~~outer~~ or the inner world in some of its kaleidoscopic combinations, shadowy like a fading sunbeam, yet as real in fact and consequence as the substance of the everlasting hills. These, from whence-soever they come, the soul allows, disallows, and judges, for, in spite of its intimate relationship with them, *it* is above them and apart.

Think of feelings how overwhelming, how exalted, or how debased,—like the swellings of the mountainous



billows, now lifting the life to meet the heavens, now sinking it into the trough of the sea. Feelings of joy and hope, of love and sorrow—each a handmaiden short-lived and of subduing beauty—lay their wreath as homage on the shrine of Truth. By these the soul is affected, exalted, degraded, purified, refined. They come, they go; come—the fair ones—like gleams of sunshine, like the hope of youth, like the promise of the year as if with immortal beauty; go like the vanishing shadow, leaving behind only loneliness and tears. The soul is affected by feelings; but when they have passed it must prepare itself to journey on across the vacant plain, and to bear the common burdens, amidst the dust and drudgery of the day.

Yes; the soul is something above and beyond its moods, its thoughts, its feelings. It is not unaffected by these; but though *they* enter into its life, and join in weaving the web of its responsibility, *it* is indivisible, sovereign, self-determining, and alone.

Therefore it is the subject of a tragic possibility—the soul may be “lost.” How full of terrible pathos is such a thought! And yet such a possibility is inseparable from the prerogative of freedom and self-determining choice.

### III.

For the soul is subject to many external attractions. In the youth of men and nations there is the desire for

physical prowess, in civilised communities and in later individual life the longing for wealth, the longing for knowledge, the wish for what is called "position." These things are not to be undervalued ; they are God's good gifts ; but an important question is,—for what *selfish* ends do men seek them, and by what means are they acquired ? Sought for often from the desire to be held in estimation by others, and for the love of power which such estimation brings with it ; is it not so ? And if sought for from motives predominantly selfish, then, then, Immortal, ask, and have an answer—What price have I paid ?

There may be those among you who care<sup>6</sup> nothing about power. Well, my brother, do you care nothing for pleasure ? Is there any man among us so great a self-deceiver as to imagine this to be *his* attitude of mind ? Pleasure ! the delight of the brain, the delight of the affections, the mysterious thrill of that borderland of nervous sensation lying between the body and the soul—is it all evil ? Assuredly not ; but the question is,—Of what character is the pleasure you have sought for ? By what motive were you moved to seek ; and again, what price did you pay ?

Is not the price of coveted prosperity often dishonesty and untruth ? Is not the price of coveted pleasure often a half-paralysed brain, lost health, and ruined soul ? Ah ! many a pinched and anxious home is the witness of a triumph of commercial dishonesty ; many

a pale face seamed with passion, lined with care ; many a ghastly spectacle of ruined womanhood flaunting under the lights of London, are the witnesses of pleasure purchased at a heavy cost.

Well, I ask—in the name of that one great Master I ask you—stop, and think—in that quiet, earnest, business-like way that belongs to Englishmen, face to face with facts—What does it profit ?

Yes ; you can get power from money, from reputation—if you will give up, if you will give up honesty and truth. Yes, young man, you will get pleasure of a sort by drunkenness, by debauchery, by impurity—if you give up your own high nature and your own personal life. But O remember, like King Charles, in the great romance of this century, starting from his bed in the midnight, realising the footstep of Strafford, as he comes in his ghostlike visitation to reprove his treacherous friend,—you will spring up, yes, you will spring up—not when I speak to you, not when you stand in the crowd, not when your ~~and~~ friends are round you, not when your wild convulsing passions are exciting you—but you will spring up, O kindled soul, trying to be a king, yet discrowned, unrobed by your own disregarding of evil—and you will find a spectre passing up the gallery of life, making his footfall felt in the gallery of death ; and you will hear a cry—first, like the rising of the winds of the Atlantic—low, mysterious, touching ; then like the gathering storm—loud,

tremendous, convulsive; then like the wild tempest on the sea of the future life, when the question comes with unanswerable solemnity, What did it profit? Old merchant of London, if you have committed yourself to dishonesty; "dear young man, if you have allowed yourself—God help you! and am I too cruelly to condemn you?—have allowed yourself to be the victim of sensual desire; what I ask from one and from the other is, that you will fix your eyes upon that great picture, that you will fasten your thought upon that moving object, and that you will listen to the low word, to the gathering wind, to the increasing storm,—listen till you read in its awful *crescendo* the judgment of the Passion.

Yes; you have shattered your nerves; you have betrayed that friend; you have ruined this man or that woman; you have joined hands with the spectre of death. Hard! Yes, it was hard; but you have done it. Look at the thing you have done; look at the price you have paid. Mankind thinks well of you; the crowd applauds you; the multitude join their voices in your praise; your friends are not ashamed of you. They say, "We have done the like ourselves." Surely there are plenty to help you to go on? Yes, plenty; but across the darkness, across the storm, through the noise of the music, among the footlights on the stage, under the gas-lamps of the street, in the whirl of the drawing-rooms of our wild London, in the



offices of our not too scrupulous commercial life, in the columns of our newspapers, there comes a voice, which it is my duty to re-echo from the pulpit—the voice of the sense of purity, the sense of honesty, the sense of self-denial, the sense of truth—the voice of common-sense. “Look at the thing acquired,” it says, “admire it, make the most of it—as a connoisseur after a purchase does with his pictures or his china; then reckon up the account, pay the bill, consider how much you have given for it, and ask—Christ gives you the answer—What does it profit?”

My brothers, that practical question must be pushed to a severe, an unvarnished answer, because when you translate such deeds into intelligible language, they mean this—the loss of your soul.

#### IV.

What is it to be “lost”? O terrible question,—hard to face, hard to answer, impossible to banish from the mind. The very phrase brings with it thoughts and images which have haunted persistently the human brain during man’s short disastrous history. The legends of Italian mountains, the weird tales of German forests, nay, the legendary lore of every people, sad whispered histories of workers on the mountains, ghostly stories of the toilers of the sea,



high efforts of human genius, the poem of a sunny optimistic Goethe, the solemn words of an intense and terrible Dante—all, all are filled with the disasters of those of the human family whom we call in pathetic sorrow “the lost.”

To think of it is to land ourselves in insoluble problems—sometimes, indeed, in a temper of impotent rebellion of spirit, when we fail to remember the limitation of our knowledge, or rather the depth of our ignorance. This indeed we know, that the New Testament speaks words severe and terrible for wilful sinners, as well as words of boundless pity for the sorrow-laden and wretched; this we know, that all voices from Eternity—above all, the voice of Christ—speak of Sin as *the* disaster, and leave to the mind the impression of its boundless consequence of horror; this we know, that God is very terrible, very merciful, and of awful justice; this further, that each soul has freedom of choice, and therefore responsibility; this also—Ah tremendous thought!—that persistently to abuse that freedom and disown that responsibility is to be “lost.”

•“Lose his own soul!” How heart-shaking is the phrase! No, we cannot measure its full significance; but none the less we have facts of experience before us which illustrate all too truly its meaning.

There is such a thing as an almost silent, or worse a perverted, conscience,—a voice that *should* guide,

either speaking so low as scarcely to be heard, or in trembling accents of uncertainty, or without a firm, unflinching, decided judgment for the truth, whispering, indeed, in lower tones and with a hollow gasping voice—like the gasping utterance of a dying man—that things are not as they should be, however much the soul deceive itself. There is such a thing as secret disapproval by the soul of its own action, scarcely allowed at first to betray itself, silenced and driven back with petulant brutality when it creeps forth from its dim dwelling to witness, yet *there*, and only biding its time. There is such a thing as a soul *possessed* by this in fullest power, that is, not only suffering from moral impoverishment, ashamed, afraid, but not repentant, such a thing as the loss, in fact, of self-respect. Ah woeful plight! when, unless a hand be stretched to help, or a voice speak loud to awaken, the way is paved, the doors are open, for the tempter's visit; and, if he come *then*, my God! almost any sin! There is such a thing as moral paralysis—the will so broken by repeated ~~acts~~ of sin, that it has no longer force to guide and govern, but is carried captive—helpless, pitiable—by the passions. There is such a thing as judgment clouded, no “wisdom that cometh from above,” no sense of the right direction to be taken under the guidance of truth and duty, and then a “certain fearful looking for of judgment”—the uneasy, restless tossing of a poor lost spirit chained to a delirious dream.

Ah yes! What is this, what is this but so far forth the *pœna damni*, the revolt from God, the departure of *His* Presence Whom to know is Eternal Life? what is this but to be "lost"?

Doubtless much may have been gained in compensation. A slow result of infamy is not infrequently some measure of success. Judas Iscariot acquired his thirty pieces, Simon Magus the plaudits of the crowd, poor Charles Stuart won immunity from immediate destruction by betraying Strafford; Tito gained his place and rank in Florence by abandoning Baldassare, his more than father. Men have been base enough to ruin those to whom they owed the love of faithful sons, for the sake of self-advancement, and *have* succeeded. Yes; but each at last has found his own Aceldama; a terrible voice from each breaks the eternal silence—a voice of warning or of woe, in the language (pardon it) of human prudence—"Was the game worth the candle?" in the solemn words of Scripture—ponder them—"What did it profit?"

Listen, my brother; listen, I entreat you, to that question now. Do not evade it. Bring your religion into the region of practical reality. Look facts in the face; deal with them calmly, stubbornly. Tempted, wavering, fallen, successful in what the world had to offer you, make the most of your successes, but scrutinise the bargain with practical intelligence; you have gained much, but what was the price that you paid?

Nay more, if you *have* gained much, how long will your acquisition stand? Translate the question from the Past to the Future; from the talk of Time to the language of Eternity. O lost spirit, O immortal forgetting immortality, “what *will* it profit to gain the whole world, and lose your own soul?”

Stern voice, thank God, that will not be silenced! stern question, that will have an answer! It wails in many a wind; it is written on many a face of a so-called “successful man;” it stands like a cruel inquisitor by the rack, demanding its answer from the dying; it speaks in accents of withering irony by the stately bier of the dead. The drunkard, the adulterer, the liar, the hypocrite, the thief—each who has gained his “whole world,” and moves about respectable and undetected, *as yet*—to these it cries in ghastly mockery or in awful prophecy, “What *has* it profited, what *will* it profit, to have gained the whole world, and lost your own soul?”

Ah! my friends, it is asked and answered across eighteen centuries, in accents of love, and strength, and sorrow, from the Cross of Christ. Very solemn, very terrible, very penetrating in its power to waken, to revive, to subdue and soften, is the voice of Christ. Turn to the Crucified. In that strange and suffering vision you are thrown forward to your Future, and back upon your Past.

“Upon your Past!” Pause, with sad heart and tear-



dimmed eyes, and look upon that picture. The sun is up, the sky is blue on that fair summer morning; the soft green leaves sway gently to and fro, soothed by the tender caresses of the wakening wind; the air is heavy laden with the breath of flowers; the voices of the birds are charged with summer; the green blinds of the old house bring quiet shadow in the growing heat; the low of cattle comes across the river from the broad green meadows; the river itself flows on, still and clear, reflecting many an image on its breast,—the red roofs, the green trees, the grey cathedral towers. What is wanting? what is gone? No more young voices sound around the house; no more the plash of oars and ripple of the water on the boat-side tells of strong arms and merry hearts. The same, yet not the same; a Present calling up a happy Past, only to make us feel that it is gone.

So the soul on whom the clouds of sin had settled, the soul that had wandered from its Father's house, retraces its steps to the sunny home, the home of innocence, finds it indeed still bright and beautiful—but changed.

Terrible to think of the “lost soul;” tender the thought of the soul preserved in innocence of its first love of God; but remember, if the world *has* been powerful, if temptation has been all too strong, yet still there is a power of retracing evil paths—the way of penitence.



Ah ! not the same as unsullied innocence and the spotless soul, but still most beautiful !

The winter woods stand brown, and still, and leafless, and front the winter dawn. Quiet and distant show the long lines of living amber, and deeper crimson, and glistening gold, against the slate-grey sheets of peaceful clouds, which half conceal the stretching silver of the upper sky. Slowly the sun is sinking, and now behind the screening of the clouds he leaves for long only the golden gashes in the cloudland to show where he has been. The winds are sighing in the leafless branches, the rooks are cawing solemnly across the hills, the silver light is spreading in the higher heavens, pure, cold, against the fainter blue ; only through that cloud-rent, where the crimson is brighter, there seems a glimpse of worlds of glorious distance, for which to wait with patience, not untouched by sorrow, like the patience of the wintry dawn. There is no glow like the joyous brightness of the cloudless summer ; but there is the autumn message—glimmering hope and quiet sorrow, and the calm light and strength of patient waiting and unruffled resolve.

So have we seen the tender strength of penitence, the evidence full of beauty and sorrow that "the lost may be found."

Ah ! but also may not. It is this power of ruining itself for things of small account which is the witness at once of the soul's dignity and sorrow.

How tremendously impressive is the question of the text when we think of this! how decisive must be the answer!

V.

For such a question as this gains its impressiveness from the fact that it implies the immortality of man. This is why it presses for an answer; why the decision must be peremptory and clear. Indeed, it is worth our while to remember that just by such teachings our Divine Master "brought life and immortality to light by the gospel." For Christ's sayings to have an adequate meaning—often, indeed, any meaning at all—you must assume man's eternity. This life is not only too short for the full development of the principles He leaves in the soul, but some of these principles are positively meaningless unless this world be merely the vestibule of another. These principles are directions for the expenditure of time, the use of talents, the order and arrangement of the simple and recurring actions of life, always on the supposition that we are immortal, capable of infinite advance and happiness, capable accordingly of infinite misery.

Men will not deny the horror of a terrifying or of a hardened conscience; but if conscience be no herald of a future judgment, no prophet of a future of sorrow which the soul is preparing for itself, then such things would

be not unnaturally treated, as strong natures treat an over-strain of nerves, or a too sensitive capacity for feeling petty sorrows,—they would treat it as a disease to be cured; loss of self-respect might be fairly looked upon as the mere down-heartedness of a morbid temperament—in fact, the loss of a soul as a dream, a folly, a fiction of theology, where no soul is to lose!

No, my brothers; to ask such a question—unless mere instance of mental craze—to ask such a question and insist on a decisive answer, is to “bring life and immortality to light;” it is to assume and emphasise man’s immortality. This is why a verdict on the matter is important, why the question is impressive, because we are here, in the only true sense, in the region of *practical* wisdom. Men cannot but acknowledge that not to forecast the future, and act as well as may be on the forecast, is folly. Sensible men among you do not fail to shape your conduct under the guidance of such a principle; but then how many are true to it only within the limits of a bounded horizon! The people of Pompeii doubtless were practical and prudent enough, acting on the *data* of life before them—acting on all but one: Vesuvius, with its terrible possibilities of volcanic attack, had not been taken into their reckoning, and that made all the difference! And the man who acts with foresight and prudence in all the concerns of daily life, omitting only one datum—the fact of his immortality—may acquire much, may succeed

in many things; but in the solemn muster-roll of the wise and foolish of this world, I ask you, in the judgment of sagacity, Where stands he?

Yes, the solemn question assumes our immortality. It reminds us that to neglect *that* fact throws us wrong in our reckoning with the most common of daily duties. This, this is the practical demand of the wisdom of Eternity: "What doth it profit, if a man gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

No doubt this "whole world" is a gain now, but fresh from this hint of immortality we see that our question has a future form: "What *will* it profit?"

Now turn to the Cross. Forget for a moment the sympathetic multitude and the preacher's voice: be alone in Eternity, face to face with the dying Christ.

## VI.

There are three characteristic facts in the Passion which bring out the answer:—

(1) It is a spectacle of moral majesty. It means the close of a life of unvarying truth and unflinching duty; it means its logical close and consequence amid the forces of the world. To speak in daring human language, bluntly—had Christ willed to be a pretender, He need not have died. Christ's death is a witness that faithfulness to truth and duty *at any cost* is demanded of us all.



(2) And again it is a spectacle of supernatural mystery. Certainly the Crucifixion *seemed* the end of a good man's life through the envious phrenzy of a mob ; in fact we know it *was* the fulfilment of a deed of boundless self-sacrifice—the way, the only way, to save mankind.

(3) It is also a spectacle of *individualising* efficiency. There is, there may be, an individual relationship between that act and *each* soul. *Each* soul may thus, stretching the hand of faith and repentance, appropriate the proffered benefits and power of the Passion.

“There is no profit, there is unfathomable loss,” say the dying lips of the Crucified, “in gaining everything the world can offer at the cost of *that*, so loved of God, so planned for, so sorrowed over, of that which needed the outcome of a boundless moral energy, and a supernatural action so full of love, of severity, and of pity, at the cost of that which can hold all the glories, not of the world, but of Eternity—at the cost of your own soul.”

Young man, burn that decision deep into your heart, and act upon it in the power of Christ. Will you then barter that soul for the approbation of the creature, for the applause of the crowd, for the pleasure of sin for a season—that soul for which Christ died ? When your passion is clamorous for a wicked satisfaction, when you are tempted by your own corruption, or by evil friends, say, with your eyes on the Crucifix, “What will it profit ?”



- Old man—with your heart grown hard in worldliness, now secure in your reputation, your means, your success—think, when the hour for leaving all has sounded; think, when your children are round your bed, and your eyes are growing too dim to see them; think, when the mourning coaches stand ready for the costly funeral; think—with your eyes on the Crucifix—think *now* what answer *then* must be given to the pressing question, “What will it profit?”

Clergyman—when you stand in the pulpit, and are tempted by rhetorical exaggeration, by watering down of truth, or by inconsiderate and unbalanced assertion of it, to seek self, not God’s glory and man’s salvation—fix your eyes on the Crucifix, and ask, in thought of your final account with your Master, “What will it profit?”

Good lady—when you are tempted to sell your daughter at the West End, for a fortune or a coronet, to a man who has no love to offer her, and to be whose life-companion, is to be degraded and debased—fix your eyes on the dying Christ, think of your child’s eternal future, and ask with trembling, “What will it profit?”

Ah! one and all, old and young, men and women,—especially ye young men, who are in the first fires of temptation, whose souls, too, with youth’s freshness and vigour, are still open to the forces of God’s grace—write deep in your hearts the decisive judgment of the

Crucifix on the contrasted value of the world and the soul.

Settle it in your minds—A will engraced to hold the hand upon passion; a heart watched faithfully in such of its issues as *can* be known; self-discipline, and then self-conquest; the habit of quiet indifference to the sneer of the worldling; the faithful restraint of a rebellious body; patient endurance, calm persevering;—these are conditions of a Christian life; these the guide-marks to a better country; these the preparations for that heavenly vision in which Christ Crucified is at last Christ Crowned.

## VII.

Brethren, to abide by this decision, and to follow the example of Him Who witnessed to it, is supremely serious. Nay, to say only *that* is to fall far below the requirements of the case, for to do so is *everything*. To value not place, name, property, health, pleasure, advancement, for one moment, in comparison with duty and goodness and truth, is to have a true sense of proportion in life; and to have this sense so enthroned as a *moral* power in the will, and so habitually energetic as readily to decide in the sudden consequences of action—this, this is to live worthily of our undying destiny; *this* may be to suffer, but it is to be strong; this is to act with a truly practical view of a life so mysterious as ours; this at last is to be a centre of blessing, and

to “possess the soul,” not only “in patience,” but finally in peace.

Ah me! Every fierce peak of unrelenting ice, every dismal stretch of inhospitable snow, every rolling billow of the grim interminable stretches of the cruel sea, every storm-vexed leaf of the autumn forest, every wind-driven cloud above the winter woods, carries no message of despondency, only shrouds and then glorifies the morning on the heavenly mountains, to those who have sternly refused the world’s allurements, in comparison with goodness, with God. And this has been done, and *can* be done—that is at once our warning and consolation,—by fixing in the mind the principles of the Passion through the grace our Master offers, purchased by His Blood.

• Well, then, kingly soul, lift thine eyes—O lift thine eyes to things of eternity! Endure all things, suffer all things, but do not give in to an evil world.

And, if thou hast given in; if, for all the glory there might have been, there is in fact only unworthiness, impurity, untruth; if, if, at least, things with thee are far enough from satisfactory,—get thee to the bleeding feet, make thy confession, ask for needed succour, form a fresh resolve, kneel there till thou canst realise the blessed revelation, “Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;” till thou canst cry, in trust and sorrow and thanksgiving, “Lamb of God, Thou hast taken away my sins, even mine.”

## The Decision on the Deliverance of the Soul.

*'Come unto Me.'*—St. MATT. XI. 28.

CHRIST'S life, then, dear friends, summed up and emphasised in the revealing yet unfathomable sorrows of the Passion, furnishes us with judgments decisive, final, and fruitful upon the situations of the soul.

We are thrown, we have seen, into a world of confusion, and sin, and sorrow ; we *need* deciding principles. We are brought, further, in full view of our grave responsibilities ; we are brought sooner or later face to face with *ourselves*. And Christ—as man's Representative—in the one case brings out our dire need, in the Passion ; and in the other He, too, by His teaching, life, and action of energetic struggle, with point given to them by the anguish of the Cross, insists on the worthlessness of all that *surrounds* ourselves, compared with our own real Being—decides emphatically on the immeasurable value of the soul.

You accept His verdict, my brother ? you find it



• true? And therefore you say, "Yes, O Preacher; I worked for wealth, laid myself out for reputation, sought satisfaction in worldly pleasure; went lower, surrendered to the demon of desire, submitted to suggestions of the meanest and most corrupting selfishness. I have found it hollow; Christ is right: I cannot live only in the crowd, I cannot live only in the satisfaction of a sensitive body or a self-seeking mind; I am myself—a living soul; and with all this am restless, unsatisfied. O what doth it all profit? The price is too high; I—my very self, with a sense of eternal destiny—am being lost, am being lost; these things are worthless, mad, blind, abominable. I awaken from this deceiving dream, and see my real, my forgotten dignity. What then? Is there a Christian answer to the question, *What shall I do?*"

## I.

Yes, there is an answer, and it concerns us here and now. To ask it is to remind us of another important situation of the soul. It is not only face to face with a perplexing life, nor with its very self; the soul is also face to face with its *sins*. That is what you mean, my brother. Your sin, thank God, at last "has found you out;" you are in full view of it, and you cry, "What then? what is to be done?" The



Christian Religion has an answer. It was spoken by Christ in His tender teaching, 'it is made absolute and energetic by Christ in the all-embracing love of His Passion. Listen, sinner, here is the answer of Jesus : "Come unto Me."

Let us consider the situation. "Face to face with sin." You have the outward evidence of this sad fact before you every day. The moment you waken *from* the dream of youth, everywhere you are eye to eye with evil.

One morning the newspaper brings you letters on the "unemployed," and before you rise images of want and misery, and of the discontent which comes from both. Another, you read that up the telegraph wires has swept the news of a *reconnaissance* in Egypt—"casualties insignificant, three privates killed;" and before you rises the picture of three saddened homes, and the possibilities of many untold, unknown sorrows. You read the announcement of a death. "Poor fellow!" you say, and think how the happy father had that boy's arm about his neck a year ago, you remember, and now has been standing, desolated, by his grave. You have met one lately, young in London life, whom one year ago you remember with a face that spoke of frank and generous goodness; and now you are struck by the *blasé* look of worldliness or worse, and know too well that what *was* so beautiful has been half ruined by listening to the voice of temptation, persuading him to

“see life”—that is, to sin recklessly and without restraint. You remember, in your experience of early days, that pretty little bright-eyed girl, image of innocence, light-heartedness, and joy; and you learn that she is somewhere in the great city, ruined, hopeless, helpless, swallowed in this insatiable monstrous London, among “the lost.”

Brave-hearted man, you cry out against the mysteries of evil, “Sin, sin, how terrible!” and in better moments resolve to do something to lighten this world’s load of suffering, resolve, anyhow, to do your best.

Yes, my Brothers, I can believe it; you will do what you can. But stay. It is all very well to resolve to take the right side in the struggle. Let us, however, be practical. If my duty is to fight a foe, I must not begin by declaring a truce with him. What I *do* will be of force and value in proportion to what I *am*. If my generous wrath is kindled against evil plain before me, if I am at least to *lessen* evil in society, to diminish suffering, and lighten or sanctify the sorrows of my fellow-men, I must pause and think, Is the Prophet crying, “Thou art the man”?

“Charity,” they say, “begins at home,” though certainly it must not end there; and likewise moral effort, if elsewhere it is to be of value, must begin there too. To help others will indeed help *you*, but never deceive yourself into imagining you act wisely, or well, or as a man and a Christian, if you are content to let evil have

its way in yourself, while you wish to control it in the lives of other men. Look, my friend, look at the Crucified, and stand face to face with *your own sin*.

“With your own sin!” What is it? What is it that hinders the “peace of God in you”? what in *you* contradicts His nature, corrupts your principles, weakens your truer self, places freezing arrest on your better endeavours, chills the warmth of your purer affections, destroys the fervour of your prayers? what enervates your spiritual energy towards God, making you lazy, worldly, irreverent? what paralyses your moral efforts towards man, making you ungenerous, ungrateful, inconstant, selfish, unkind? What is it that makes you cruel and unfair to your own soul, holding it back from following out its better purposes, ashamed of a decided line in goodness, slow in advance, quick in backsliding, *ready* to be tempted by the first godless fool who passes by? What is it? Find it out, face it, deal with it. Whatever it is, it is *the* serious matter for you. Face *your sin*. “Ah!” again you say manfully, “I do and will; but how, *then*, to deal with it?” Before I answer, again I hear that voice from Calvary, “Come unto Me.”

## II.

But stay. There are several voices attractive, seductive, ready to answer.

(1) First comes, especially now-a-days, the Apostle of Culture. Now Culture, in its wider, truer sense—the cultivation, as far as may be, of all man's faculties—is a noble thing. The Christian Church herself has been the home of Culture, and to her some of the best possessions of a cultivated civilisation are primarily due. But by culture seem now-a-days often to be meant a certain refinement and artificial training of thought and fancy and taste and feeling about those things which decorate human life, and give pleasure to the sensitive side of man's nature. The apostle of culture is for gaining more of the "healthy sensuousness" of Greek life, and condemning as narrow and revolting the "Religion of Sorrow." Well, one objection is, this is a religion that never can do for the unlearned and the poor; another, it is scarcely fit for a world where sorrow is such an overwhelming fact; another, that when it affects a certain amount of Christianity, there is an evident absurdity in it, for it finds no place for the Cross; self-denial is its abhorrence; above all, the one supreme and awful fact—the fact that overshadows life, the mystery of mysteries, with which we all should be in battle—Sin,—it deals with it in a way to discredit its teaching with earnest men. Practically it says this, "Dress it up, throw it into striking situations, keep out of sight all that is revolting in it; give it false colour, a languid and attractive expression, brightness of eye and grace of movement; give it



the advantage of poetry and music ; bring man's highest gifts, and prostitute them for its adornment,—then you can enjoy its pleasures, and keep out of sight its possible disadvantages ; in fact, sin if you like—but sin with taste and refinement, and then you will not find life so bad.” Well, the Cross is a decisive answer to *this* : *this* has no real Christianity in it, at all events ; here you may have a life of poetry and music plunged at the same time in the most inveterate selfishness, drenched in the fumes of a death-bringing but soothing narcotic, plunged in mortal sin.

My brothers, away with it ! do not listen to such teachings. These will never heal the wounded soul, or bind up the broken heart. Better, a thousand times better, the roughest of the rough ; better the sting of painfulest treatment “that makes earth's smoothness rough ;” better to be a very Philistine of the Philistines ; better they who are at least stern in their ungodliness, not soft nor wilfully self-deceiving, not decked out in sham garments of glory, not clothed in imitation goodness, not wasting time on “taste” for the purpose of forgetting they are living *souls*,—better to be one of these than a soft, sentimental, seductive, highly cultivated devil. Away with such apostles—apostles of such culture ! These put “bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,” “darkness for light, and light for darkness.” Apostles of Culture, indeed ! apostles of Satan !

There lies a city in the Volcian hills, half ruined



now, though once a place of human energy. It sleeps and dreams in still and soothing and unearthly loveliness; the silent streets form now a thoroughfare for flowers; the houses are crept in and out with mosses, lichen, trailing plants, and rich and beautiful but poison-sheltering leaves. The very churches have renounced the offices of Christian worship, and weeds of rich luxuriance and flowers of brightest colour make their place of rest and beds for nurture there: around the pillars of the doors they twine, deck out the ruined windows, carpet the altar steps, and sleep upon the sacred slabs. By day there is romance of summer sunshine, the brightness and weird seductive glamour of an enchanted world; by night—ah! when the twilight steals, and night comes sweeping over all in folds of ever-deepening darkness, rest not there; or if you rest, you are beguiled within a poisoned chamber, and soon will be a helpless victim to the deadly malaria of the grave. Fit image this of those who use God's fairest gifts for vilest uses. They preach of life, but lure to ruin—emissaries of darkness, messengers of death!

Against the fitness of mere sentiment or false culture to deal with sin, there is a decisive protest in the earnestness and anguish of the Passion, an unfaltering judgment from the Cross of Christ.

My brothers, never persuade yourselves you are not sinners because you can deck yourselves in garments of

“Culture ;” never allow yourselves to imagine that sin set to music, or advancing with stately rhythm of poetry is the less sin ; never dress up your sin ; to rebaptize is to hide its true appearance, or forget its real name ; never call lusts “ sweet sentiments,” or bad thoughts “ forms of intellectual development.” Look your sin in the face, and subject it to some harsher treatment, for if you do not, you will have a sore heart at the last.

(2) Then there is another plan, the way of what St. John calls repeatedly “the world.” Simply put your sin aside. If it does obtrude, shrug your shoulders, and make allowance for it, as “what all men do,” or “the way of the world,”—as if a multitude of votes should make darkness like the day-dawn, as if the clatter of a thousand voices made a musical chord. “Be not over-particular,” so runs this nostrum ; “be respectable, wise, serious, prudent, full of common sense ; don’t make too much of the gravity of sin ; don’t dwell too much upon it ; forget it if you can ; in any case conceal, avoid being found out, and never make your confession.” This is the way of that old tradition of godlessness, which gains strength from generations of evil principles accepted, propagated, used. The secret meaning is, “Take life as it is, and make the best of it you can ; only never forget one rule—put God, the thought of Him, the very name of Him if possible, out of all your reckoning, in living in and dealing with the world He made.” Well, to this there is one objection.

It rests upon a falsehood, the falsehood that you *can*, in the long-run, be happy without God. You cannot. You may become *blasé*; you may grow "respectable," philosophical, callous; you may swell the crowd of unreality, of unbelief, of coldness, of unlove; but at last, remember, of practical despair!

For sin so treated has a power to sear the heart. What once was bright and fresh and beautiful, in the clutch of unresisted sin becomes blasted and outworn. The free heart, the brave spirit, the generous soul—once like the flowers in sweetness, and in brightness like the dawn—all, all are over, and you have a soul in binding slavery, the constant pressure of self-conscious evil, and at last interior and degrading torment, in spite of all your callousness,—an example of that last dreadful power of conscience, to "make cowards of us all."

Yes, underneath such theories there lurks a hidden falsehood. Men persuade themselves that ignoring sin is dealing with it; that, leave it, it will stand still; man imagines that he can go just so far as he pleases in wrongdoing, and then can pause. Beware! that there should be such a permitted thought is itself an evidence of the dangerous treachery of the human will. It is true—thank God!—that those who *have* gone wrong, waking to earnestness, may by grace pull up in a downward course of evil, though never without *some* loss, and with treatment of sin far other than this worldly plan—still none the less, if you embark on a course of evil, simply

ignoring the evil in it, confident that thus, and when you please, you can master your sin, beware—Oh beware lest you find too late that your sin has mastered you !

(3) And now I come to my message. Here is my method of dealing with your sin. It may be hard ; in the end it will be blessed.

One voice says, " Dress it up, enjoy it in a disguise ; " another says, " ignore, forget. " There is yet another—listen and act. It pierced the heart of Matthew, the Jewish tax-collector, sitting and counting his ill-gotten gain ; it won the Magdalene in her fatal beauty from paths of ruin to a sweet womanly sorrow ; it gave strength to the martyr boy to face the lions, it has given the young courage against the fiercest artillery—the artillery of derision ; given them the courage of faithfulness and prayer ; men thoughtless, passionate, selfish, it has turned to earnestness, restraint, and self-forgetting ; the indolent it has made active, the self-satisfied humble, the cruel tender and kind ; it has come, clear as a silver trumpet, or solemn as the sighing of the rising wind, or soft and moving, like the words of one we love laden with tears. It has always been loving, and always true ; it has spoken again and again in persevering goodness, and to souls in all the varying degrees of human sin and human wretchedness ; and again and again it has had the same strange magic influence to make men sorry, and to make them strong,



—the voice of the greatest, tenderest, strongest Man, sounding its matchless helpfulness across long ages—of tenderest, strongest God, sounding its sure deliverance in our very souls; crying, in our extremity of forlornness, “O sinner, face to face with that sad fact—your own sin—O lonely, downcast, guilty, weary, heavy-laden, come, come unto Me.” Listen, my brother; listen with the experience of your unsatisfying sin, listen with your sense of the emptiness of other remedies, listen with the earnest eagerness of your longing soul, listen with the deep submission of your longing heart; *you* He speaks to; *you* He yearns for; do not turn from Him; Jesus calls you—“Come,” He says, “come unto Me.”

True, His words may ere now have been quoted to you in the spirit of religious tracts, or even canting nonsense; in a tone of empty sentiment, or forced and unreal feeling; but though *this* may—rightly enough—have been meaningless to you, yet there is a meaning in His Own loving summons, “Come, come unto Me.”

“Come unto Me.” Can we doubt the serious and practical meaning of such an invitation? Surely here is no poetry, no language of mere metaphorical rhetoric, no invitation to mental athletics, leaving character untouched, unchanged. No; countersigned and emphasised as it is by the Blood of the Passion, it is a decisive verdict that the one way for human life to find its rest and perfection is to listen and “come.”



## III.

Again we ask, What does it mean? Ask what does the parent mean, who calls the undutiful child to abandon wrong and rebellion, and return to a heart that aches for him with patient love. Ask what a strong heart means when, after some cloud has swept between it and a heart that was dearer than life to it, it has in noble penitence begged forgiveness, and prayed the one so loved with passionate longing to "come." There is a movement of spirit to spirit, there is an approach of the soul to its Saviour, which can only be invited by the cry of Jesus, "Come unto Me." He means certainly that submission of heart and will, that upspringing of longing and desire towards His living person, which expresses itself, which declares its activity of motion, in longing for, loving, imitating; nay, more than imitating—*growing into*—those Divine lines of motive and feeling, and act and habit, which constituted the subtle traits of what we dare, with deep reverence, to call His "character."

The soul "comes" to Jesus, to be taught, indeed, by His teaching; "comes" to Him, to be fed, indeed, on His life; "comes," indeed, to be pardoned by His boundless pity; "comes" to be guided in its perplexed and darkened journey; but the act of "coming" must be the free act of the free will of the creature, using the assistance offered by the grace of God; the submission of

heart and thought and will to the tone and temper of inner life and outer conduct sanctioned and exhibited in the Saviour.

Yes, brethren, we come to Him by that bowing of spirit—at once an act of worship and of effort to be like Him—that bowing of spirit before His heavenly-mindedness which is due. The soul sees what, indeed, the unbeliever himself can scarcely deny—in *that* life a tone of higher, purer, kind than has been ever seen on earth before; humility so deep as to touch the heart, and yet no want of direct, incisive, unbending strength; a mind full of meditations on the highest things which can engage man's attention, and yet, so to speak, endowed with constant and practical common sense; a moral sense so truly balanced that condemnation of wickedness was severe when needed; yet never a lack of the tenderest human pity. Here the soul awakens to see the constant, deep, strong sense of another world, not vanishing in dreamy sentiment, but thrown into practical working form, to meet the demands of duty in the details of common life; and over all, a love all-controlling, all-subduing, all-illuminating, self-forgetting, energetic, tender, strong, harmonising a whole character into a type of universal beauty and usefulness, good for all time.

Seeing this with the inner eye of the real self, the human spirit awakens to some measure of love, fitful, frail, alas! and failing, but real—for "We needs must love the highest *when we see it*;" and in love it moves

to Him in worship, in devotion, in desire to submit, itself, its all, to Him. This, this is to "come."

Sometimes it is by the slow advance of a sweet, pure spirit, gradually, gently, growing into the love of goodness, finding it in the *personal* tie of the "love of Jesus"—the religious experience of innocent, duty-loving souls. So St. John; so many a child of God. Sometimes it is by the swift revelation of *that* long-sought-for—at last seen to be only, yet completely, in Him." So St. Paul; so other men (in their degree) of high moral purpose, finding the living heart they need in Him. Sometimes it is by sudden flashing on the spirit of the sinner of his own degraded baseness, the folly of his madness, the vileness of his evil, seen in "the Light of the World;" and then the joy in sorrow of seeing in Him a Saviour to lift him from his degradation and despair. So in St. Peter; so in the Magdalene; so, my brother, in most of us—wakened to hatred of sin. But, in each case, this is certain. They who "come" find in Him "a real Presence," an active life; spirit strikes Spirit, the weak and lonely soul of the creature needs support from the Being of beings Who made it; it "comes," and finds rest in Christ. Ah! listen to, think of the glorious, the needed, the blessed summons, "Come unto Me."

## IV.

This is, indeed, another way of saying, "Reach forth to Christ with faith." For faith is a fresh capacity in the soul, a new power of spiritual vision; it is its own evidence; just as in things of sense we say "seeing is believing," it practically opens to a man wider landscapes than those of this life, and the awful realities of another world. Above all, by it the soul sees and "comes" to Christ; and, let us remember, it has real power just because it is no mere mental act; it enlists in its service heart and will quite as much as understanding; there is moral power in it; it affects, it changes character; and so it is that Scripture says "by faith we are saved." But there is one attitude of a "faithful" soul which is especially described as "coming to Christ" in the case of a sinner just wakened to the hideousness of sin.

My brothers, I repeat it: to "come to Jesus," you are not required to perform mental athletics, or to force your feelings, or to "believe that you are saved," and thereby insure "safety." There is a miserable unreality about this class of teaching, which has tended to alienate all that is robust in human character from Christianity, because they have been led to identify it with such travesties of the Gospel of Christ. No; but "Sinner, come unto Me" at least means this: When you see your God wrapped in the fair frail folds of



your human nature, and over them thrown—in His deep humility—the garments of the grave ; when you see Him by some mysterious necessity—if indeed He is to deliver humanity—nailed to a Cross of anguish, bleeding, broken, scorned—at least, then, to “come” must mean a joining hands with the moral temper, to be readily and eagerly obedient to the spiritual temper shown by Him upon the Cross ; and therefore, because He was broken with anguish for evil, you, when you are sorry—truly, sternly, heartily sorry—for sin—then, then only, then certainly, “come to Christ.” To come to Jesus is to repent.

“Truly and sternly!” Yes, it is possible you may, before now, have had a passing sentiment on the subject—this will not do. I heard a little lad one day go singing, through sun and shadow, in a Florence street, “O Death, how dreadful ! O Eternity, how strange !” And putting my hand upon his head, I asked him, “My son, what know you of Death and Eternity ? what experience have you had of the sad and strange ?” With a bright smile, the curly-headed little fellow answered, “Only a little meditation, sir, the sentiment of the moment ; that is what people say.” Yes ; and in religion, dear friends, there may be the “sentiment of the moment,” or the hollow echo of “what people say ;” but real “coming” to our Master—seeing He is a Master crucified—is no sentiment ; penitence must be honest, real, stern, and deep.



For first it is a sorrow of heart and will—no mere play of feeling, springing from a sense of contrast between our sin and His perfect goodness, springing from gratitude for His individual devotion to our wellbeing, springing from a sense of the real beauty of goodness, and the treachery of our betrayal, springing in fact from the love of God.

And in it there is at least implicitly the readiness to confess our sins. Whether the Church's system has or has not been always wisely used in this is nothing to the point; the abuse of any good thing is no argument against the wise use of it, and the restrained but emphatic manner in which the Church of England, as every part of the Christian Church, teaches the blessing of Confession, is another instance of how true she is to the Bible, and how true to fact.

Unconfessed sins, especially if of a serious character, are not only subject to God's *natural* punishments, but are also haunted always by the spectre of a great fear. Further, if unconfessed, sin flourishes and is strong. Sin—like some poisonous plants—grows luxuriant in darkness; real penitence implies a willingness to confess our sins. It implies, further, a purpose fixed, with all the will at our disposal, as regards the sins we know of, to *try* to lead a different life. It does not pledge us to immediate success in every particular; certainly not—but it does to the effort and readiness, in the strength of Christ, to try.

## V.

Further, brethren, remember such "coming" to Christ is the highest manliness.

One of the favourite *ruses* of the devil is to persuade men that there is something "manly" and "independent" in habitual submission to the dictates of selfishness, in calmly acquiescing in being "tied and bound with the chain of our sins." Believe me, it is the strong heart that can truly sorrow for its sin, the strong heart that sets its purpose firmly to a new and more earnest effort; a coward finds no difficulty in concealing his iniquity, it needs the heart of a *man* to help him to make his confession. When you told that lie which lives in your memory, from fear of "what people might say;" when you surrendered to temptation; to self-indulgence, impurity, vain-glory; when you led that other wrong by your example; when you added yet one more sin to that poor lost life by gratifying your passion; when you sneered at religion, or maintained the silence of shame about prayer or reverence in the face of "fools" who scorned religious duty, saying in their heart there was no God; when in the excitement of society or work, in the drawing-room, in the office, at the dinner-table, you dared not traverse statements to which your conscience gave the lie—then, then indeed you played the coward.

But like Paul, strong to withstand evil, fearless of the

• world, yet broken into tears at the thought of the men and women he “sought and slew,” at the thought of the anguish and constancy in Stephen’s dying eyes; like Augustine, calm and trustful with the Vandals at the gates of Hippo, yet shedding bitter tears at the thought of his own sin; so you, when you conquer self; when you restrain ungovernable impetuosity; when you are not forgetful of the claims of others upon you, and of the claims of God; when you point your finger with unflinching determination to the Past, and say, “This one, that one, would have been better but for me; but for my act or my omission, this or that society, at home, at school, at college, in life, would have been of higher tone but for my submission to its *dicta*; this conscience of mine would have been cleaner, and the mind easier, but for this or that unworthy choice;” and then, face to face with the highest goodness, realise Christ’s agony as a witness to God’s view of sin and its consequence,—*then*, when you turn in sincerity of sorrow, and reality of confession, and firmness of endeavour for a better life—then indeed you are playing the man.

• Penitence is Manfulness because it is *Truth*.

Ah! my brother, face your sin. If you do not get rid of it, you are like the miserable prisoner chained to a decaying corpse; but if you do—Oh! brighter than the breaking of the morning which brings hope after a night of crisis by a sad sick-bed; sweeter than the first

drops of rain in a sun-scorched thirsty land; more blessed than the glory of the sunlight, giving hope of the abating of the tempest after a night of ocean storm, is the heart of a true, a penitent Christian, who has laid his sins at the feet of Christ!

“Labouring and heavy laden,  
Wanting strength in time of need,  
Fainting on the way from hunger,  
Bread of Life, on Thee we feed.”

Face your sin then, fight it. Be in earnest, be sorry, give it up, play the man. Strive; you will find it hard, but there is help, and it is possible;—the Passion decides that you need assistance, that you—your own self—are of incalculable value, that in Christ you will find all blessing, if you seek Him in faith and repentance. Blessed Master, give us grace to hear and to obey Thy summons, “Come, sinner, come unto Me.”

My brother, point by point we have touched together some of those footprints, it may be of serious warning, but certainly of unspeakable consolation, left to us all by the Son of Man in His redemptive suffering; but we cannot, it may be hoped, pass from the Passion week to the closer contemplation of that greatest fact of human history, shrouded by the clouds and illumined by the sunlight of the Holy Week and Easter Day, without feeling always and everywhere the lasting power of mysterious acts of Redemption.



For, indeed, these acts bring God and His creatures into close and blessed communion, give force to prayer and strength to sacraments, slaughter Death the Destroyer, and brighten the vision of eternal life. We cannot surely enter upon such a season without seeing always and everywhere some flash of those eternal principles of Patience, Humility, Courage, Self-sacrifice, which unite men to one another, and renew them in the image of God.

And if it is so, can we turn from the thought of that supreme love and sorrow, without some upspringing of a lofty and legitimate ambition to rise nearer to our splendid destiny, and ourselves to be better men? We cannot, it may be hoped, fail to have re-kindled within us some fresh desire to help the labouring souls of our fellow-sinners to a happier future by a holier life.

And if so, we ought to remember with suitable resolve that such desires and such ambitions need never in any one of us be passing breezes of fleeting emotion, need never be inoperative. We may—yes we may—let us at once remember, lay aside “the sin that doth so easily beset us,” and by the power of the Passion, and through the victory of the Precious Blood, become what we are meant to be—each in his measure—a servant of our Master, a representative of His unspeakable goodness, forwarding, energetically forwarding, the kingdom of Christ.



Oh ! what we may be, let us acknowledge we ought to be ; what we ought to be, let us here and now determine by His grace we will be.

May He in His unabating strength and unchanging tenderness deepen our penitence, reinforce our resolution, strengthen us in struggle, support us in sorrow, be to us here a Pattern and a Saviour ; and hereafter, when, after our little day of life, we are called to His presence, our exceeding great reward.

## The Decision on the Perseverance of the Soul.

‘*Abide in Me.*’—ST. JOHN XV. 4.

THE Passion of Christ, my friends, is a summary, a synopsis, of His severe, and tender and fruitful teaching, and—in a fallen world—an appropriate close to His matchless life. “As Christ avowed principles, and showed, as far as we could bear to see, the mysteries of our relation to God and the facts of another world, so those principles He *lived* right out to their uttermost consequence of self-sacrifice, and those revelations He emphasised and countersigned by His death.

Thus He has decided matters for us which require deciding. The soul of man finds itself—so to speak—in certain situations in which decisions are important. It is, generally speaking, aware at least that it is in a strange world, to the trials and temptations of which it feels itself wholly inadequate; further, it is conscious of itself, and that it must work upon, and influence itself; then it is face to face with the mystery

of sin, and *that* requires wise treatment; and finally here and now, we see it in one situation which it is important to estimate, and in which Christ Crucified has something to decide.

In those former situations decision is clear:—(1) The soul *needs* God, and He is found in Christ; above all, in Christ Crucified. (2) The value of the soul knows no measure but the greatness of Christ's sacrifice; we may seek many things, but none must we cling to if it costs us our soul. (3) Sin must be dealt with, or it will be the soul's ruin; and there is one way of dealing with it,—and that is, by faith and repentance, coming to Christ.

Now, a further step. The 'soul awakening to the world, the soul facing itself, the soul facing its sin, finds decisions for its duty in the Cross. Having come to Christ in sincerity, the soul is face'to face with the fact of an onward journey, with the possibility of a Christian course. "Is there," it asks, "is there a decisive answer in the Passion on the possibility and method of a holy life?" Let us see.

## I.

Brethren, the earlier moments of sincere repentance and conscious conversion are sad though sweet—I say this broadly; but not meaning, dear friends, to dog-

matise about "conversion" in any narrow sense. God fulfils Himself in many ways in many souls. Do not let us attempt to narrow Him down; but this, with reverence, we may say: whenever, slowly or suddenly, or once or often, we turn to God with will and purpose, whenever we realise the existence of a higher life, when the darkness of this world is replaced by the tender twilight of a better hope, or (to use another figure) when the unhealthy artificial lights of this world are outflared by the breaking of a pure and heavenly dawn; when a man begins to realise that he does not live for these passing moments and these vanishing dreams; that, having done wrong, *that* may be cancelled in Christ's Absolution, and he may yet do right; when he awakens up to something of his place, his work, the resultant of all his acts and omissions in his *character*; when he begins to feel that final consequences are accumulating *there*, not to be known or measured in the office, in the drawing-room, in the usual round of work, where custom and habit rule, but only in fulness in an eternal world; when he is won by the beauty of goodness, and surrenders to the love of God—then, *then*, face to face with Christ's work, flying to his Saviour, he "rejoices in hope"—he has, yes he has, at least a touch of heavenly joy.

After such times there comes many a change. Heaven just now seemed open; but now it is closed and guarded with brazen doors; now is felt the hard insist-

ance of the circumstances of ordinary life, the freezing arrest placed on spiritual delight by the state of things as they are, the "dash of cold water" on our glowing hopes. It is well. You and I, my brother men, cannot live simply in a first enthusiasm; it was, perhaps, a great enthusiasm, that first spring of sorrow and truth, that repentance, that confession. No, no; Christianity is worth more than to be gazed at as a glorious picture; if it is anything, it is a working principle. We saw our sin, we heard Christ's decision, we acted accordingly; we repented, we came to Him; and then, what then?

Turn then to another decision. Face to face with onward struggle, we ask, O Crucified Master, Is there—and, if so, *what* is—the hope and method of a holy life?

## II.

Now the crucifixion of Christ is a transaction in a mysterious sphere; we cannot grasp its full meaning, as we cannot grasp the full force of such words as "eternity," "infinity," "space." If the mind allows itself to become conceited or mocking—as has often been the case in unbelief—then it is easy to represent it in grotesque and sacrilegious ways—to miss *all* its meaning, and refuse its blessings; for mockery is the child of ignorance and vanity, and the mother of darkness; and reverence is the herald of light and of the morning.



The Passion is a mysterious transaction, dealing with facts of tremendous significance. We know enough to know that the full meaning of these facts, which have created the necessity for such a sacrifice, is something far surpassing our present ken; and that the knowledge of *this* alone should make us very serious, very earnest, very watchful, very full of holy fear and determined effort in all that touches human sin. Out of such truth comes a further: namely this, Christ in Himself, His life, His death, His whole being, as it is now enriched with the power and experience of the Passion—Christ is *necessary* for man. His acts and sufferings are *needed* powers for our deliverance and well-being; we *may* have a close share in them. We *ought*, therefore, to fail in no effort or duty which insures the receiving of that share; the Passion, by all its mysteries of hint and statement and reserve decides this duty, and says as plainly in vigorous *acts*, as He Himself said in earnest *word* “If you are to *go on* in the Christian course, the method of a life-growing persevering towards holiness is, “Abide in Me.”

Now there are three thoughts which, at the threshold of our subject, may help us on.

(1) The Christian life is a chequered scene of light and shadow, a journey subject to startling and depressing change.

There are days when the sunlight dreams down the clefts of the Apennines in exhaustless wealth of bc-

wildering beauty. The most rugged peaks are rose-tipped or purple or golden, according to the background of light and colour against which the Great Artist had set their place: the olives move, no longer now in garments of grey mourning, but in the soft drapery of summer, with a shimmer of silver and showers of dancing light-drops, shaken, so it seems, from streams of liquid radiance, in which they are bathing, by the passing touches of the caressing wind; the lizard basks in panting delight beneath the sun's rays, or darts across the path like a sudden flash of variegated enamel and gold; the flowers dream in the sunlight, or sleep in the shadow—the marigold and sweet narcissus, the wild rose and cyclamen, the lily and the myrtle, the dark anemone and golden broom—all deepen or lighten the bloom of their beauty under the soothing of the shadow or the gilding of the sun; the ferns in sheltered crevices, massed in plumes of moving softness, the foxglove peeping round the rock, the graceful falling ivy, and the tender wandering vine—all, all lend their touch of soberness or smiling to complete the magic dream of a land of summer; the Campanili of the mountain churches peer up above the rock and point to heaven, the cool spaces within the frescoed naves, with mouldering columns, antique mosaics, age-worn altars, invite to refreshing shelter from the burning day; the voices of the workers that come up from the terrace of the vignas, or mingle indistinctly on the breeze from the assembly in the

village streets; the goat bells that tell of human labour, the church bells that call to thought and prayer—and away *above* the gorges of the mountain, the azure of the arching dome of heaven, and *beyond* these the burnished opal of the stretch of level sea—all combine, in man, in nature, to whisper the poet's dream of brightness and peace.

Can we forget then that the night falls with deathly chill? Can we forget that the wind comes carrying clouds of darkness, the bearer of destructive storm? Can we forget that the frost will cut the flowers, and the blight destroy the grapes before the vintage is due? Can we fail to remember that the nestling homes of beauty and peace to the eye of the passing travellers mean often human toil and human sorrow, grinding poverty and corrupting sin? It would be wrong not to rejoice in the sunlight: still, life is earnest, we may not forget the shadow.

The Christian life has its days of dawning glory, and its nights of chill. Do not, do not be disheartened because you, like others, must feel the chill and face the darkness. Repentant, converted, who have turned with a will to your Master, remember the Christian life, though blessed, *has* its ups and downs, its sunlight and shadow, its fair flowers and withered leaves, along the path of its journey: all the more valuable is His command to *abide* in Him, all the more helpful when the dark day comes.

(2) And again, there is nothing in this to astonish or perplex. The experience of life has proved that it is to be expected—the experience of the lives of commonplace Christians, and the experience of the saints. Still in our struggle—nay, by the very terms of the struggle—we are “in the world.” True, there are times of high, calm thought, and better purposes, and clearer vision; but there is an atmosphere of fashion and custom, and thought and principle, which creates difficulties and pooh-poohs enthusiasm, and paralyses effort, and pulls us down. You will be warned against religious enthusiasm, because *sometimes* it has been hollow; you will still have to hear God misrepresented, because man, in his conceit, fancies that he ought to be in a position to fathom all difficulties and reconcile all apparent contradictions at a glance. You will still be told that the really cleverest people do not set much store by the Bible, or see much use in prayer. You will still be urged to fall in with the “rank and file” of decent-living people, who do not think any too much of religion; to “see life”—that is, in some measure, to practise sin; to take no trouble about church and sacraments and prayer; to be a “fool,” if you like, in the sense of Scripture, saying in your heart “there is no God,” but on no account to be a “fool,” in the sense of the mass around you, saying that you will not take public opinion as the standard of truth. You will find, in fact, that still there is “the world;” and that



\* —though as a Christian you must not flatter it, and you must not fear—still that it is hard to avoid it, hard to overcome; that to do *that* requires stern determination and earnest effort; and then there comes the cheering, bracing voice of your Master: “One way only—one to persevere in your struggle—Abide in Me.”

Ah! the battle thickens. Just because you are really striving, the enemy is striving tenfold more. Now you are conscious of sudden and strange temptations, such as never came merely out of your own heart; temptations arising from subtle untruths of character, to acts half hidden, and so, dangerous; of selfish self-seekings, which chill and destroy the energy of love; to views of life practically incompatible with the claims of Christ and the needs of the world, claims and needs for your *service*. Now your eyes are wider open to what evil is—no mere fashion or habit, but the rebellion of the creature against goodness, and evidently advanced by no mere chance combination of favouring circumstances, but by the malice and activity of a living and perverted Will. You are conscious now that Satan *is*, and tempts you in right earnest; “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the children of disobedience” is no longer a dream or a pretence; he is withstanding you in your struggle; now you hear with thankfulness the decision of the method of continued victory—“Abide in Me.”

Ah! beware of him—of Satan; but obey Christ and



fear not. Beset you may be by bad thoughts, attracted by seducing enticements, the subject of fierce temptations, even exposed to persecutions in modern life as real but more veiled and subtle than once they were. Well, be not astonished ; fight you must, and if in earnest, and realising danger, listen again to the encouraging summons, " Abide in Me."

And then you find how all evil around you is reinforced, is aided by the treachery of your own heart, the rebellion of your own flesh ; how tried you are by varying and undisciplined temper, by fierce and unregulated desire ; how you *see* before you a vision of true manliness, of self-restraint, of truth and simplicity, of earnest grasp of the sacredness of duty, and the nobility of labour, and the serious and balanced effort to put life to its true uses ; and how you *feel* within you a power drawing you to falseness, baseness, a counterfeit manliness which is unmanly ; how you feel " the flesh." Ah ! *this* indeed must still be fought in the Christian struggle, and with it come out all sorts of perplexities, " mixed questions" of right and wrong, hard to decide : " Is it consistent with Christian simplicity to do *this* act ?"—" Is it right to allow *this* amusement ?"—" Can I wisely permit such a pursuit ?" and so on. Well, brave soul, all this is to be expected, and " ever the worst turns the best to the brave," if you listen and obey the decision of the Crucified, " Abide in Me."

(3) And this third thought must never be forgotten. Two of the boldest calls and claims upon human allegiance ever made were these of Christ: "Come unto Me;" "Abide in Me." No other religious teacher ever dared to use such language, and language less determined and decisive is useless for man.

Take the measure of that thought. Such daring utterances as these are indeed the outcome of truly human strength and penetrating human sympathy. It is the strength of indeed a heroic manhood that daringly confronts our encroaching danger. It is also the voice of human sympathy, world-embracing. Those who have dim perceptions and languid imaginations and cold hearts neither realise nor feel with human struggle. These are the voices of a true human heart, as the Passion is an act of strong human courage.

But such cries would be an insult to our troubled souls if only the cries of a *man*. However deep the sympathy they betoken, their very decisiveness would be but a measure of the madness of any *mere man* who dared thus to speak.

These, my friends, these are the voices *of God*, God wrapped in the nature of struggling humanity, robed also in the garments of the grave, showing man as much of the mystery as man's mind can bear, penetrating Himself to the very depth, by actual personal contact, of man's extremest sorrow: He, Son of Man, Son of God, He, with His awful unbeginning life;

## THE DECISION ON THE

limiting Himself to the trials and conditions of our nature, He has a right, as none other, to lay down, as the method of advance in holiness, this decision of His life and Passion, "Abide in Me." "

### III.

And now you naturally inquire, my brother, "What, in the name of common sense, what do you *mean*?"

I answer--not exhaustively indeed, but without hesitation,—*this* is meant. Broadly speaking, to abide in Christ is this: to endeavour to maintain, and not to impair, as far as our efforts go, the living union with our Saviour, which is *the* gift of Christ to the soul—in His Church on earth. To be a living member of His Church, His Body, is to be in union with Him, the Head; to maintain that living membership is to "abide" in Him.

Yes; but you say, "Answer more explicitly." Well, to maintain that membership requires (1) that we follow His example, and (2) that we obey His plain commands.

Now let us get nearer still: how is this to be really done?

Well, (1) we abide in Christ by the guidance and government of *thought*. Thought is more or less active in us all. At times it seems to escape us, and flee from us with lightning speed, but thought may and

must be disciplined. It is possible to encourage a tone of purified and elevated thought. In the region of thought, isolated acts repeated create habit, and habits cultivated constitute character. It is possible to grow in habits of pure, just, high-toned thought; of thoughts of kindness and charity, of goodness and truth. Guard your thoughts. And therefore, since books are only the record of the thoughts of men who have thought before you, be careful in your reading. Do not stain your thought by touches of corruption, by reading bad books. Guard your gaze. Guard yourself in conversation. You must be *in* an evil world, you need not be *of* it; a high, pure, noble tone of thought may be cultivated. Forget not the wisdom of *some* devotional reading, of the Holy Gospels, or the wise writings of the servants of God, to lift your thoughts from things of earth to higher things. In your dealings with life, with literature and art, and social opportunities, and daily duty, with yourself in lonely moments, remember—O remember—the apostolic injunction: “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good repute; if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, *think* on these things.” Here is a real interior duty and effort; do it, at least attempt it, and abide in Christ.

(2) And then, too, well may we abide in Him by disciplined efforts of Will.



My brothers, of all things remember that *wishing* is one thing, and *willing* quite another. Strength of passion, too, is often and falsely taken for strength of character. *This* depends upon a wisely guided and determined *will*. Passion enslaves and sweeps a man before it; will—exalted, disciplined will—conquers passion, and frees a man. How much greater advance in goodness and duty would be made by many a soul if the feebleness of half-dreamy wishes towards goodness were changed into the vigour of a determined will! The law of Habit here, too, is powerful. The habit grows of willing to do or leave undone; and in the great battle of good and evil, the habit of choosing and determining in the right—right definitely and practically—may by grace be fostered, as well as the evil and cowardly habit of giving in. Turn a deaf ear to the clamour of self and passion; brace your will in following your Master; at least let “to will be present with you.” “How to do” you may not “find” in yourself, but you will be on the sure way to it. This, by fixing your will in goodness, to will with reasonableness and resolution on points of duty—this is to “abide in Christ.”

(3) “Abide in Me.” Go into broader thoughts, yet surely quite intelligible. Then there is in our Master’s life and death a temper, there breathes through His whole character a spirit, which we, His people, may, if we will, catch in our measure by constant contact with



Christ. *There* indeed was earnestness beyond all words in intensity, and with it a sweetness and gentleness never austere. *There*, too, such hatred of evil as knew no treaty with it, and yet such kindly and reassuring love to sinners; devotion and seriousness; unswerving principle and regulated refusal to palter with duty or truth; high and awful thoughts of another world; and with these, comprehensive sympathy, perfect large-heartedness, interest in all that seemed human, simplicity and practical dealing with the daily concerns of life. The gentle courtesy, the largeness of thought, the entire self-forgetting, the perfectly balanced sentiment, the unflinching fearlessness which at once won the high-born and wealthy and rebuked their selfishness and pettiness of aim. Then the sweet sympathy, the humble forgetfulness of self, the high view of man as man, the absence of pride in what most men are proud of—celebrity, or learning, or culture; the deep sense of the dignity and greatness of what is *human*, and of the goodness and moral elevation possible to all; above all, the sense at once of eternity and of the plainest duties of common life; these both won and comforted, and rebuked the discontented murmurings of the poor. Such a character, in fact, as has not once in its perfect round of goodness been seen in this world was evident always in Christ. Ah! by the patient struggle that makes up the Christian's inner life, by striving earnestly, faithfully, to catch something of His spirit and temper,

some of His firmness and gentleness, truth and considerateness, dutiful effort in common things, and heavenly-mindedness, His tenderness and His strength,—thus, thus we may “abide in Him.”

Brethren, in our onward struggle, do not forget there will be times of conscious weakness; then, *then* it is we must set our Master before us, and try more than ever to live in His spirit. If we do—it is the experience of His servants—there soon follows a consciousness of advance, of achievement, in a strength not our own; it is the blessed result of abiding in Christ.

Indeed, also, if you abide in Him, this too will grow upon you—a belief in and love of goodness, and the dying out of another temper—cynicism—which is the temper of the world.

(4) But this, further, is involved, and we must not omit to notice it, in faithfulness to Christ's example: loyalty to work and duty, and, if need be, a readiness to suffer. Idleness is the mother of vice and cruelty, of distorted views, of self-pity and worldly cynicism, of *tædium vitæ*, enervating weariness, alternations of sensuous excitement and deep despondency. Work, God's appointed discipline for man, is a great corrective; and interior work, the work of thought and effort for others, a work possible to those whom health or circumstances hinder from physical exertion; these teach *patience*,—that comprehensive expression for passive virtue, the creation of the crucifix, the method by

grace—for most of us in life, for all of us in dying—to abide in Christ.

### III.

I hasten on. To abide in Christ also means to obey His commands,—His commands I mean as to actual religious duty, as the means of contact with Him, through which He makes Himself an inward gift.

(1) This we do by faithfulness in prayer. The work of the Spirit of God is to keep us in union with Christ, and the Holy Spirit is given “to them that ask Him.” Prayer is the voice of Hope; it is an effort of understanding, will, affection, dealing with the highest things. Prayer is also a power. Whatever else you do, or leave undone, never neglect to pray. It is the intercourse of the soul with God; it is the willing entrance into the most exalted society; and just as when we associate with cultivated minds they affect us by their charm, and impress us by their contact, so the soul grows in holy habits of Christ-like goodness by prayer. Prayer also brings down grace; grace is the partaking of the Divine Nature; by it we abide in Christ.

And if we “live more nearly as we pray”—that is, in fact, what the Bible calls “praying without ceasing,”—we thus extend the temper and principle of prayer through the homely duties of every day. Therefore, let

us not willingly allow ourselves to rise from our knees in deep devotion and contact with God, and then hinder Christ's abiding presence in us by evil temper, rough words, selfish and unloving thoughts towards our fellow-men.

(2) And Sacraments are the channels of His abiding Presence. In a thousand ways He comes to us; but these are *appointed* means, where there is no doubt He is.

Terribly is the tone of life injured when we only half believe our Master's words, when first we ask, "How can water, how can bread and wine, convey grace, or be the channel of His Presence?" and then decide they are more or less appropriate reminders of His Presence, and nothing more.

Brethren, we have passed out of Judaism, out of the region of shadow and symbol, into full Christian privilege, into the land of fact. Christ is with us—His Presence, human and divine, is real, not imaginary, in His Own sweet Sacrament. Repentant and faithful, be devout communicants, that "under the form of bread and wine" ye may receive and abide in Christ.

#### IV.

Ah! it is when we see life with eyes wide open that this decision becomes to us serious and strengthening.



Once we saw but the outside of things, now the real vision. Man, with vast capacities of intellect and heart, with a possible dignity and greatness all his own, is placed in conditions which are not to be forgotten, for they cannot be overstepped, but within the limits of his being and his opportunity, he is able for great things, either good or evil. Then there is human society, as it is in itself; (allowing, generously and thankfully, for all great improvements, for a higher tone in public duty and private life, for a more rooted respect, on the whole, for the rights of others;) still, still there is evident to us—If in earnest we enter the battle,—beneath, and sometimes above the common front of society—a vast serried mass of the forces of evil. We see lives impoverished by discontent and rebellion, instead of enriched by effort; narrowed by selfishness, instead of enlarged by sacrifice; poverty in its hopeless depression, vice in enslaving tyranny, wealth in its debasing selfishness—a vast, dense mass of foes, implacable, terrible, through which a Christian has to cleave his way, and which it is his business and calling to diminish and destroy. And then how we shudder when we dare to look within!—these darkened hearts of ours, these treacherous wills, these self-deceiving sophistries, these moral weaknesses, this love of ease, love of self readiness to find excuses, wavering efforts towards good, brisk eagerness for evil. O human heart, canst thou take courage? Yes, yes; the thought that we are not



alone, that there is Another's strength at our disposal, that if we use *it* we stand; that *it* we may use, and use to effect and victory. This makes us serious, but it consoles and strengthens. Listen, in view of the battle before you, listen to the Redeemer's command, countersigned by His tremendous sacrifice—"Abide in Me!"

## V.

Brethren, the very effort implied in obeying the command gives us courage, and stimulates our determination. There are two lines of truth constantly traceable in Divine Revelation: these *seem* parallel and never-meeting; somewhere they meet, as yet we know not where; and among these, who has not felt the force of the statements of Scripture, that on the one hand all depends on God, on the other hand, all depends upon ourselves. "Be not weary in well-doing;" "Quit you like men;" "Fight the good fight;" "He that endureth unto the end the same shall be saved," this we hear on the one hand. And then, on the other hand, "Who is sufficient for these things?" "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" "Without Me you can do nothing;" and so on. And these seem most nearly to meet and touch in the sayings of St. Paul: "I can do all things through Christ, that strengtheneth me;" and "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you."

Now it may at times seem attractive to minds of different type to grasp the one side *or* the other. Men have tried to construct a "practical Christianity" out of moral precept, with an entire ignoring of Divine grace,—at first attractive, at last hollow. What seemed all right shadows off into darkness; a morality without Him Who is the source and strength of moral obligation soon becomes an unreal phrase; and at best in such systems, if life is guided away from graver social pitfalls, if the sins against the second table are on the whole avoided, the soul is left sterile of the fairer flowers of goodness, if not exposed to an easy violation of every precept of duty to God.

Or again, men are tempted to ignore the plainest teaching of Scripture on the duty of human effort, throwing all aside in some foolish and inapplicable phrase about "works:" hence so much unhappy unreality, phrases about "believing and being saved" with no corresponding fulfilment of duty, no corresponding efforts to obedience, a system fostering forced feeling and self-deceiving conceit, often attacking, and generally neglecting, such plain revelations and commands as those which touch the very Sacraments of the Church of Christ. Brethren, there are none of these short cuts to salvation. "Salvation" is the purifying, elevating, training, completing the whole human character by a union with Christ. The heart of faith can trust, and

in its measure know, that God is all, yet it itself must struggle; that Christ alone is Conqueror, yet that without its own earnest strife it cannot share the victory; that God saves us, "not indeed by ourselves, but not without ourselves;" that by grace we can do all things, that without grace we can do nothing; that Christ has done all things for us, but yet we must not relax our efforts. And so it is true that there is something generous in the human heart, to which the appeal of the Passion comes not in vain; it is true that our Master claims of us that *we* shall do our utmost as He, so nobly, has done His; true that He wakens in us the higher desires and motives that move to effort. Yes, yes, we are stimulated by this at once appeal and decision of the Passion—"Abide in Me."

## VI.

Let us be up, then, and earnest. We are in a battle; if we fight not we shall be lost. The battle may be serious, the world may sneer, the devil may tempt, our treacherous hearts may betray—but Christ has died!

Take courage, then, you who have turned to Christ. You cannot be a saint, because you are repentant, all at once, this afternoon or to-morrow morning; but you can by grace persevere.

Abide in Christ by the patience that gives you

possession of your soul; by the gentleness through which we “learn His way;” by the courage through which, though falling, you “rise again;” by the strength which foretells God’s comfort to the heart. Abide in Christ by humility to which He “gives grace,” by the mercy to which is the promise of mercy from God, by faithful prayer, by devout reception of Sacraments, and, let me add, in crude but expressive language—by “trying again.” Ah! forget not this: God will scarcely blame because by the frailty of your nature you “cannot always stand upright,” but God—let me say it with reverence—has a right to be angry with you, if you *will not* cling to your Saviour, if you will not try again.

I have done. Your time and mine will not have been wasted if I shall have persuaded you to remember, that of all questions which may engage our attention, not the least interesting are those that touch Eternity; that of all achievements worth desiring is the advance of the soul in the science of goodness; that of all struggles worth engaging in is the struggle against evil in every shape and form; that of all ambitions worth encouraging is the ambition ourselves to be better, and to serve in making better the sad world which is the scene of our probation; that above all persons to be loved is One to be adored and loved and trusted supremely, and that is our crucified Master, Jesus Christ.

Blessed Master! He is for all a power of perseverance, "mighty to save." A few more years, a few more earnest efforts, a few more heart-piercing separations, a few more prayers, a few more tears, and they who have listened and obeyed the Decisions of the Passion will find that by His merits and mercy there is perfect fruition of perfect goodness, and a "rest that remaineth for the people of God."



## Jesus and the Resurrection.

*'He preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.'*—ACTS XVII. 18.

**H**ERE was the subject, shortly stated, of St. Paul's sermon, when he was alone at Athens ; and here for every Christian, and for all time, is the entrancing topic of Easter Day. On this day of days the heart leaps in joy and welcome to our risen Lord. The Christian in Holy Week, like St. John at the cross or the Magdalene at the sepulchre, lingers in love and longing round the crucified Redeemer,—the Cross means so much to him, so much more than he can ever fully fathom, of teaching and revelation, of warning and hope, that he hardly cares to leave it ; but the Cross itself with all its blessings takes—he knows full well—its wealth of meaning from the news of Easter ; and just in proportion as he has plunged into the unmeasured sorrow, in that proportion he welcomes the news of this glad morning, placing before him, in the pregnant phrase of Scripture, "Jesus and the Resurrection." What in part—for the subject is in-

exhaustible—what in part, at least, was involved in the Athenian sermon of St. Paul?

## I.

Before that question is answered, we may glance at the answer to another, because it applies so directly to ourselves: What were some of the motives that may well have moved the great missionary Apostle to preach as he did?

(1) Well, first, he of all men must have felt the great capacities of the race whose heart and conscience he tried to reach. He stood that day in what was, without question, the intellectual capital of the world. The men whom he addressed were the inheritors of the best gifts of civilisation and culture which had been given to man. True, then Greece was in her decline; but the audience before St. Paul were the children—if the inferior children—of mighty fathers, and the heirs and guardians of their splendid achievements. Theirs was the race in which poetry and philosophy, the highest powers of art and the greatest efforts of thought and culture and imagination, had reached the loftiest level yet known to man. Memories of great success in art and original creation ran side by side with memories of noble efforts in government and war dashed, indeed, by hideous blots of wickedness, but conspicuous among men.

From their restless intellects came the wisest speculations on truth and life; from their rich imaginations the most powerful poetry; from their independent spirits the fairest dreams of liberty; from their deft hands the most perfect expressions of artistic beauty. It was to them that the world owed the successful efforts that hurled back the tides of barbaric invasion; to them was due the plastic tongue, framed to express the most delicate shades of human feeling and the most subtle speculations of human thought, and which itself was the appointed vehicle by which the fulness of God's final revelation was conveyed to man.

And this was but a symbol of the unmeasured capacity of man for entering into the highest things; for certainly then, and then only, can a religious teacher really throw himself with hope and heart into his work, when he feels himself touched and illuminated by the thought of man's immense capacity for a progress so far-reaching that it knows no limits but the undreamed-of advance of Eternity.

(2) And the Apostle must have felt that the capacities of his hearers, however great, were not greater than the need they had for what he had to tell.

Standing alone in that city of unrivalled beauty and undying memories, the soul of the Christian preacher was stirred within him at a scene of heart-piercing idolatry. Beneath the outer spectacle of restless movement, unsatisfying speculation, luxurious pleasure-

seeking, aimless toil, the eye of the Apostle detected almost unhindered forces of evil and a miserable scene of deepening corruption. No brilliance of outer effect could conceal from him the saddening realities, pride and envy, laziness and selfishness, cruelty refined and inhuman, lust unbridled and degrading—man, miserable man, with all his wealth of mental capability, and the accumulated results of a high civilisation, the mere sport and plaything and willing slave of the “principalities and powers,” the organised and energetic forces of an army of evil arrayed in apparently resistless hatred against his highest hopes.

(3) And if the Apostle felt this, another motive worked within him. He, too, had been a slave, bound in darkness and in the shadow of death; he, too, had been wasting his power on what profited not, and needing sorely a deliverer—and a deliverer had come. In the vision on the Damascus road he had seen the face of the Son of Man, seen the beauty and glory of incarnate goodness, seen and loved, and been delivered; he “owed” it to others, that *they* should know and share that blessedness; he owed it to his beloved Master that he should do His work and advance His kingdom; he was goaded by the charities of a spirit of service, and stung into activity by the force of a great devotion. The men before him were capable of the highest things. were in need, sore need, to be delivered and saved. One only could do it, One only could save and satisfy,

could arouse and lift them. "He preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection."

Brethren, this is worth remembering on Easter Day : human hearts and souls have capacities beyond mere earthly toiling ; we too are creatures of Eternity, and hope for glory. We also are buried too often in sin and darkness, slaves of Evil, slaves of ourselves ; we too need deliverance. None can save us but One, and He *can* save ; can free us from sin, can rescue us from Death the Destroyer, can open to us a new life on earth of thought and feeling and effort, can bid us look in hope and rejoicing beyond the gates of the grave. Never, never for us is not needed the thrilling story of Easter Day—"Jesus and the Resurrection."

## II.

"He preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection." There were two divisions in the apostolic sermon. In fact, it was one subject, but it is evident that the preacher was emphatic in his division, because his less intelligent or less earnest hearers went away with the startling misconception that "the Resurrection" was one of their many phantoms of Divinity, a separate God.

In reality, the emphasis laid on the two aims of the discourse was to bring out—as it did to the "men of good-will"—the essential truth, without which the preaching of Jesus would have been "in vain."



What, then, was involved in the "preaching of Jesus"?

To preach a person is strange and startling, but it is, in fact, the crucial difference between Christianity and all the false religions that have been in competition with it for the allegiance of men. To preach Christianity is to preach a Person and a Life.

Let us look at it swiftly in detail:—

(1) To preach Jesus is to preach the story of a strange and simple career.

A child is born under extraordinary circumstances, and in a remote corner of the world. Of his early days little is known but some scattered incidents—some relating to matters close to his birth-time, some to his early boyhood. He lives in extreme obscurity in an insignificant village, apparently busied in his foster-father's trade, surrounded by not wholly sympathetic relations, with the exception of his mother, who notes and ponders over striking peculiarities, apparently unthought of by the rest. In early manhood, after some thirty years, he emerges from obscurity, is singled out by a popular missionary and ascetic as the Messiah foretold in Jewish prophecy, undergoes severe temptations, and begins a course of teaching, marked by signs and wonders of mercy and goodness, which attract the notice of his country, and which lasts over some three years.

He attaches to himself some devoted adherents,

, touches and wins the hearts of the simple people, reforms in an astonishing manner some worldly and some abandoned characters, excites by his fearless denunciation of their sins the implacable hatred of people in place and authority, and is by their machinations brought to a cruel and degrading death.

With all this, he founds a society, which since has altered the history of the civilised world; and by some of the best, and thousands of unknown men, he is looked upon as the one hope of humanity, and is loved at this distance of time with a passionate affection, which affects perpetually the course of every department of activity in the strongest races of the world. Such, in scanty outline, is the story of Jesus.

(2) That life was marked by extraordinary *teaching*. It dealt with the relation of man to God. On this it threw fresh light, brought out into distinctness all that had been before half lost in shadow, gave soul and meaning to long records of revelation, infused reality into what had seemed mere form, or had been treated as commonplace and customary—above all, made two things emphatically clear: the love of God, and the dreadfulness in itself, and in its consequences, of human sin. This teaching lifted a veil from the eternal world, showed man much of his dignity and his destiny, showed him this life as of real value, *because* a state of probation, *because* the arena for deciding his place in another, *because*, in fact, having its true mean-

ing only then to be grasped when viewed in relation to Eternity.

He taught, therefore, 'the dignity and seriousness of life in all its conditions, the value of *each* soul, the brotherhood of man, the beauty and value of service to one another, and the law which fulfils all God's commandments—the law of Love—and as guide in all, fulfilment of all that ever had been revealed, the one power by which the chasm between Creator and creature could be bridged,—he pointed unflinchingly to Himself.

(3) And his teaching was illustrated by his life, and emphasised for all men by his *example*. He was meek and gentle beyond all words to picture, yet energetic and severe in his denunciation of evil; homely and kind to common people, attractive and sympathetic to young men, winning to little children, able and tender in reclaiming covetous and weak men, and lost and abandoned women; not proud in neglecting the lowly, neither subservient nor neglectful to the rich and great; fearless in condemning popular corruption; courageous in affronting bad public opinion; never courting danger, and never—when duty demanded—shunning it, and leaving behind an impression of the loftiest aim and the sublimest virtue wedded to a scrupulous regard for minutest duties in practical common life.

(4) And his place and work he boldly proclaimed

as eternal. He asserted the unbeginning and unending character of his mission and his nature, his unchanging oneness with his Father, his power, as head of the human family, to win for it its restoration to goodness from evil; claimed to send the Spirit of Life into the souls of men; required for himself entire devotion, and nothing short of worship; gave himself out as having power to destroy death and deliver from its terrors; placed himself before men as perfect man and yet eternal God, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the friend, the shepherd, the truth, the way, the life, the inward gift needed—sorely needed—by fallen and ruined creatures, and finally the judge, to whom, in his human character, was committed the throne of judgment and the final decision on the eternal place of every human soul. And this he said he would ratify and prove before the minds of all who would open their eyes to see, by himself dying, and by rising from the dead.

### III.

And all this would have had little more significance than the charm of a beautiful dream, but for something more—and that something was the fulfilment of his final promise, the *fact* of his resurrection. A great memory is indeed, for a time, a great heritage; but it, if only a memory, has limits to its influence. Men



strangely forget; the best and wisest must be prepared to be forgotten. So swift, so inexorably cruel is Time, like an advancing tide it soon obliterates the sharpest footprints, when only laid on the sea-beach of a mortal life. The leaves which make a glory of the forest linger on in russet and gold in the bare and chilly groves of autumn; fly fewer and less beautiful before the winds of winter, and scarcely leave a vestige in the coming spring. No good work is wholly lost; but mere human effort is at best but partially powerful, and increasingly fades, when once its energetic worker has submitted to the fate that waits for all of us, and passes into the chambers of the grave.

If that splendid life, that wonderful work, that unrivalled example, that powerful teaching, that Person, unlike all others ever known or dreamed of, was to live, not only as it has lived, in the heart's passionate affections for generation after generation of men; but to prevail in reversing the lines of human ruin, and have power to change and glorify a fallen race—then, then it must be true to its awful promise; it must be instinct with an unending life; it must conquer death, and assert itself undying. Christ *has* kept His promise, “Christ is risen” — that is the joy of Easter; the Risen Jesus, He is the Saviour of His people. “He preached unto them *Jesus and the Resurrection.*”



## • JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION

### • IV.

And, indeed, how natural to the human soul, in the highest meaning of *natural* desire, is this thought of Resurrection. The heart shudders at the hint of annihilation; it is settled and firm in its belief in *life*. However awful the dread teachings as to the things of *this* age—closing in acceptance and success on the one hand, in failure and punishment on the other; however unsearchable the depth of mystery in the dim strange future down which in moments of thought and wonder we peer, and peer in vain; however tremendous the idea of an individual never-ending life; however bewildering the experience of the startling intermixture of good and evil in every society, in every character; however humbling the knowledge of our own perpetual liability to error, of our own only partial and fitful awakening, in our better moments, to real fact; however saddening our sense of the severity of effort we have needed for *any* success, however trifling; of our own hidden burthens—hidden often from ourselves—of sin and shame, of failure and defeat; however bewildering our ignorance of that awful future before us; however arrested we are in headlong speculation by definite statement, severe and searching, followed by dim allusions, raising our hopes, then flitting by us like a dream—however, in fact, life does appear—must appear—a very serious at times an awful, business—still the

heart persists in a sense of *life*, and rises to the thought of Resurrection. The night is endurable, because we hope for a morning; the bud is attractive, because it foretells the flower; the autumn day is sad, but not all depressing, because spring still will live again; sleep is moving and pathetic, not full of despondency, because it tells of waking; the child is full of interest, because he is the "father of the man." Death is something more than heart-breaking and disastrous, because death itself whispers of the life of Resurrection.

"Whispers!" Yes; for long and long had men's hearts heard that whisper. They lived, indeed, in a twilight land; they could not read the facts of life in light as we can. At times so dark the dream, so thick the veil, the frail hope dwindled down to veriest shadow; their immortal nature refused to accept mortality, and yet there was for them no certainty that life would triumph. Many a truth came home to them at times, in heart, and brain, and conscience, truth—let us remember, as always is with any *truth*,—the gift of God. The obstinately upward-looking eye, the sense of boundless capacity of growth, the too plain evidence of the beauty of justice, and yet its wide defeat in this low world, the indestructible sense of the lonely self, the individual, responsible, indivisible soul,—these truths were forcing themselves fitfully on man, and with them the sense of his immortality; but to

bring the whole thing "to light by the Gospel"—for this Jesus must keep His promise; this, this was the work and office of Jesus Christ.

He shadowed out the glorious truth, indeed, in a thousand ways. The *teachings* He gave, in their beauty, in their terrible severity, in the length they went, and in the mysterious pauses they made, shrouding and concealing, as well as bringing into light, many things desired by man,—all, all pointed to a life beyond the grave. Further, the *principles* He laid down and lived, principles severe yet beautiful, leading not only to the enthronement of goodness, but to the need for aiming at absolute perfection—these also *implied* a life beyond this life of sense and failure, so inadequate to their full effect. But man needed more, and Christ gave it.

Man needed, and Christ did not deny him, the evidence, the comfort, the support of an unequivocal fact. Jesus rose from the dead on that first Easter Day. Men have been tempted to declare that if indeed the Resurrection was to be, then it would have been a public event of indisputable certainty; and then they have gone on to declare that because it took place in a corner of the world, and before one or two, and these a comparative few, and not on the Palatine, or before the eyes of the assembled thousands of Roman greatness, that *therefore* it was not. Men with the spirit of Voltaire have mocked at Christianity on such grounds as these; but mockery is the child of ignorance and vanity; and

there is no vanity so keen as the vanity of our knowledge, no ignorance so deep as not to know the depth of our ignorance.

## V.

But besides this, for a loving heart and submissive will, there is ample evidence of the Resurrection. Men forget, when they talk of "indisputable evidence" in matters of religion, that in view of our state of probation, in view of our blinding self-conceit, in view of the warp of evil in us, in view of the corruption of our hearts, the seducing power of our passions, the dishonesties and treacheries of our wills, such evidence is not to be had; and besides that, to talk of *demonstration* in things of Eternity is, by the nature of the case, to demand the impossible, as faith implies a venture, and man ceases to be a moral being if his acceptance of truth be *forced*.

Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He was seen first by one, then by another, then by companies of a few, then by five hundred at once; with closed doors, and room secured against physical intrusion, He made Himself present to sight and touch, revealing the beauty and mystery of a "spiritual body," showing at once the objective reality of another world, His Own permanent power of help and blessing, His Own asserted and assured lordship over the grave.



“Jesus and the Resurrection.” Yes; this rising crowned and completed that life of blessing. The Risen Jesus henceforth was the object of apostolic teaching; it was the refrain sounding throughout the apostolic proclamation of the Gospel. The bare thought of a beautiful human life, leaving a thin though fragrant example, and simply vanishing like all good men in the grave, would have been to the Apostle insupportable. He boldly stakes the truth of Christianity on the fact of Easter Day. Without that, he feels that the whole thing is an empty dream and useless delusion, missing its pith and core, its nerve and fibre, its invigorating energy and supporting strength. He cannot “preach Jesus,” unless it is “Jesus *and* the Resurrection.”

## VI.

To this St. Paul owed, and knew that he owed, an elevation of his whole being. There was an elevation of conscience, which made it not only what it probably was always in him, strong, but also sensitive, and, above all, clean. To this also an elevation of will, which placed him poles asunder from the weakness of obstinacy, but a master in the strength of firmness; and hence came at once the deepening of his already vast gift of sympathy and a lofty growth of moral courage.



But, further, there was an elevation of spiritual insight. He had won that clear and penetrating glance of the soul, by which a man sees the value, the incalculable value and splendour, of spiritual things. "We look"—was his own description of the habitual gaze of the sincere Christian ; "the scope of our vision is not the things seen, which are temporal, but the things not seen, which are eternal." Hence, therefore, his power, hence all power, to see the frontier at which the really sensible and wise *dicta* of the human mind on truths and duties shade into the foolish and wicked decisions of a "world" which limits its maxims and judgments to the treatment of things, with God left out of the reckoning. Hence also his quick and sensitive *touch*, by which he felt the greatness of the dignity and destiny of man, by which he loved and honoured what was truly *human*, while in the literal sense *abhorring* what was—however specious in its beauty—the mere offshoot or product of human sin. Hence, further, his complete imperviousness to persecution. It had power, indeed, to hurt, but never to harm him ; it might try and worry him ; it could never enervate—as a matter of fact, it only strengthened. Hence, finally, his ever-increasing capacity for sacrifice, that noble science of a rich and fertilising life, full of pain, dark with apparent disaster, but ever making clearer the rugged path—and ever lending strength to tread it—which leads to final victory.

Why? Do you ask why? Because there is but one power which, if genuine and vigorous, can brace human life, can turn darkness into light, can make the weak in the long-run strong, can banish fear, and give balance to the capacities of the soul—and that power—need I say it?—is love—love, not for a blessed memory, however blessed, but love for a living, an honoured, and a faithful Friend. To Him his living Master was an ever-present source of heroic goodness; he had grasped with passionate love and constancy “Jesus and the Resurrection.”

## VII.

Brethren, on this day of worship, the day consecrated indeed to self-forgetting praise of Christ, let us—but only that the better we may worship—let us turn for a moment towards ourselves.

What is my Lord in this aspect of His being, what is “Jesus and the Resurrection,” *to me*?

(1) Well, first, dear friends, here we have a sure foothold to which we may cling in a world of chance and change. How circumstances are changing around us it is a mere truism to say. Not faster do the shadows chase the sun, and the sun the shadows, over the breezy moorland on an April day, than prosperity and adversity, success and disappointment, health and sickness, delight and sorrow, pursue each other with sweep-

ing swiftness across the area of our mortal life ; and not only do outward things bear in upon us a sense of instability, but we *ourselves* are all too conscious of perpetual change. Moods of mind, like successive groups of kaleidoscopic colour, come tossing over the soul ; how and why and whence they come at times we can hardly guess, much less explain—but there they are, and with them life itself seems changing. The sunlight melts away, and leaves a sudden dripping gloom ; and the air that bore the scent of spring flowers seems redolent with a message of decay. We stand apart, and view ourselves with mute dismay : once so eager, vigorous, ready, active, fearless, self-restraining, strong ; and now—O dire disappointment of our high expectations !—is this possible, this change ? True, we may by no means be *victims* to changing tempers ; we may stand aside, and hold our own in spite of them—*this* indeed is *the* duty of moral principle, but—obey or neglect them—still, in their bewildering uncertainties, there they are.

And then come interior trials of change—deep-seated, piercing—doubts and difficulties, hesitations and startling discoveries in our own spiritual being, big with disturbance and fear. Hence temptation ; “ Change upon change,” we say ; “ can I be sure of anything ? So certain was I of this, and now I am only certain of my own uncertainties ; where now do I stand ? ” And then deep changes in the nearest things of life : death of strong hopes, death of long-cherished schemes, death of

old affections, death—in its literal sense of agonising painfulness—of those we love. It is then, then, that the child of God finds rest in Revelation. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” for “I am He that liveth and was dead;” then, amidst the shrouds of darkness, we cling to the “strong Son of God,” “the Lord of Life.” In times when depressing sense of change is upon us we may have, my friends, foothold sure and firm by our faith in “Jesus and the Resurrection.”

(2) And again, here we may find a moral example, and something more—a moral influence and ideal.

We all are creatures of influence; in some measure we wield it, in some measure also we feel and submit to its touch. Some more, some less, are its disciples or victims, but certainly it is an outcome of the law of Solidarity in the human family that we do influence one another. And every life also has some ideal; consciously or unconsciously we are making for some object which determines our direction and our course. For the Christian both are supplied by the Living Jesus in His ever-present fellowship. Here, indeed, is an ideal image of goodness, a picture ever near to correct our own low aims and pitiful mistakes, a model of how the soul must advance, through toil and sorrow, and self-crucifixion and death of old desires and purposes, to the pure clear atmosphere of a risen life. Here too is a moral influence. On every soul that will endure it there passes as from friend to friend the mysterious



influence of that risen life,—the same as ever in its power of principle, loyalty to duty, allegiance to truth, sense of the importance of the present, constant, loving, serious contact with the Unseen—the same, but crowned with the glory of asserted life and victory over the grave.

(3) And here, too, we may find a spiritual power. Not more certain are we of the calamity of change—of our yearning for a high ideal, of our longing for some moral influence—than we are of our pitiful weakness, and our need of a sustaining force. That there is such a power is at once the experience of Christians and the assurance of the Word of God. Great powers, indeed, are needed to discover the laws of thought, or the laws of a material universe—great powers to utilise both for the improvement of invention and the service of man's material life. Great indeed are the powers exerted by a Bacon, a Galileo, a Newton, a Watt—but power immeasurably greater is needed, and of that the guarantee and source is the Risen Jesus.

What power is equal to the task of bending and reforming the stricken and corrupted human will? what can grapple with the obstinacy and hardness of human hearts shut against goodness and truth? None indeed here can *force*, for then man would cease to be a moral being; but there is a power by which the hardest may be softened, the weakest strengthened, the worst reformed. There is the power of *grace*; and



it is the Risen Jesus, the Head and Representative of our humanity, Who indeed is He Who has won and He Who stores for us the blessing—the rich and unspeakable blessing—of the grace of God.

O weary soul, finding it hard to bear thy burden;  
O repentant soul, finding the weight of thy load of sin;  
O loving soul, sorrowing for the failure and suffering of others—take courage; take courage. God's grace is a power, if sought, to be used with confidence,—given, given to those who earnestly desire it—God's grace, which will melt the hard and console the weary, and bring back the wandering; this, this is thy possession in the person of the living Christ.

(4) And here, too, we have the assurance of a glorious Presence and a living Friend,—One, too, Who calls out the highest feelings of the soul of any of us—reverence and love. We bow before Him, the Holy, the Blessed, recognising real greatness in that lowly life which is yet the conqueror of the grave. Ah! if our love is guarded by reverence, our reverence is illuminated by love; for here is not only the awful presence of the Conqueror, here also is the dear and consoling tenderness of the Friend.

For indeed it is with a sense of trust and dependence, wakened only by a powerful friend, that the soul flies to the living Jesus. Did He represent Himself while on earth as the "Light of the world"? He is the same now, with the added glory of His risen life. Did He

teach us to think of Him as "the Good Shepherd," loving His creatures indeed, But with no merely wide and general philanthropy, rather with an individual tenderness, knowing and loving us one by one, leading us in danger, guiding us in perplexity? The resurrection life assures us of the permanence of that character, with a love beautiful, inextinguishable, and near to us all. Did He on earth tend the sick and sustain the sorrow-laden? Did His boundless pity stretch where man's tenderness could give no help or comfort? Did He feel for all trials in all situations? The Resurrection assures us that He is the same now, living, and once dead, and living the same for evermore.

Brethren, in moments of suffering and sorrow; in those moments, all too common, when the poor human spirit feels itself standing alone, what it needs is the assurance of sympathy, more even than the assurance of help. How often and often in the lonely chamber, on the unsheltered moorland, in the dim-lighted church, or out on the open sea; how often and often, in all degrees and kinds of unspoken trouble, has the weary, anxious working man, the half-fed little child, grown almost patient through suffering, the old woman, worn out with a toiling life, the lady of fashion, more worn with a life of unsatisfying idleness or corrupting vanity, the father in anxiety for his boy, the sailor dreaming of friends at home, the dying lad, with earth and life growing momentarily dimmer, and death gripping tighter

with his cruel grasp ; how often—oh, how often !—in the dreary night, or the oppressive day, have souls too laden with the burden of life found the one sweet solace in a cry of penitence, of longing, of trouble, to the heart of the loving, living Christ !

Let us—oh let us remember it !—Christ is alive and near us ; and if we cry to Him in faith and longing, indeed we shall not cry in vain.

## VIII.

To-day, then, is a day of joy. Boundless and exquisite, indeed, was the joy of the Crucified on that first Easter Day. There was the brightness of morning after the darkness of the grave ; the sense of freedom after the oppression of sin's clutch in the Agony and the Dereliction ; the full delight of victory over death and him who had the power of it—not for His Own sake, but for the sake of us whom He does not disdain to call His brethren.

Dear Lord ! Let us in faith and thankfulness enter into His joy, for indeed He is in this, as in all things, our Representative, and our own. In union with Him, death's terrors cannot hurt us ; life, and immortality, and hope are ours from "Jesus and the Resurrection."

## IX.

There is much in religion tinged with pain, much also lying in the deepest shadow; but some things are so clear that we can grasp them; some also of unblemished joy. This is one. "Christ is risen." Rising; He has conquered death, and we may in faith be glad with Him, for in Him we may be "more than conquerors," and He lives to help us to victory.

In this age, more than any other, perhaps, since the crash of the Roman Empire, there are many grounds of despondency. Social problems gain increased perplexity; old landmarks are lost; the scorner in mockery, the philosopher with stoical calm, the bewildered and faithless in despair, are prepared to abandon the one Faith which has bettered man, and been worthy of the intimations within him and without him of his greatness and his fall. The young, the weak, the struggling, who with pure heart and simple purpose desire to use the great gift of life for worthy ends—want, above all, to rise more and more in their love of goodness, and hope of its victory; and before them stands on Easter Day the reassuring fact—the Resurrection—as the crown of self-devoted struggle; before them stands Jesus, living, loving, Who was dead.

Cling, brothers, cling to the hope set before you. Live on the model of His rising, live by the strength it gives, live with your heart and lips hailing the Con-

queror by Whose abiding presence you may conquer too. Hail Him as your Master, hail Him as your Redeemer, hail Him with the heart's devotion your unfailing Hope, your unflagging Friend.

Hail ! for Thee the years unnumbered  
Bring their gifts of deepening joy ;  
Life that in the grave once slumbered  
Now no foeman can destroy

Hail ! for once in Bethlehem's manger  
Thou hadst lain a helpless Child,  
Lonely, 'midst Thine Own a stranger,  
Scorned, rejected, and reviled.

Hail ! for once in Crucifixion,  
Body bent in death's sad doom,  
Cramped in pain's severe restriction,  
Soul passed portals of the tomb ;

Passed beneath them, swept above them,  
Conqu'ror, Death before Thee fled ;  
Now souls live, for Thou hast loved them ;  
Hail ! great Life, that once wast dead.

Ave, Cæsar ! moaned the dying,  
Doomed by him they hailed to die :  
Ave, Christ ! the soul's low lying  
To a King Who saves them cry.

Easter morning breaks in glory ;  
Hope for man need never fail.

• Cry, true hearts who read this story,  
Living Jesus, hail ! all hail !



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